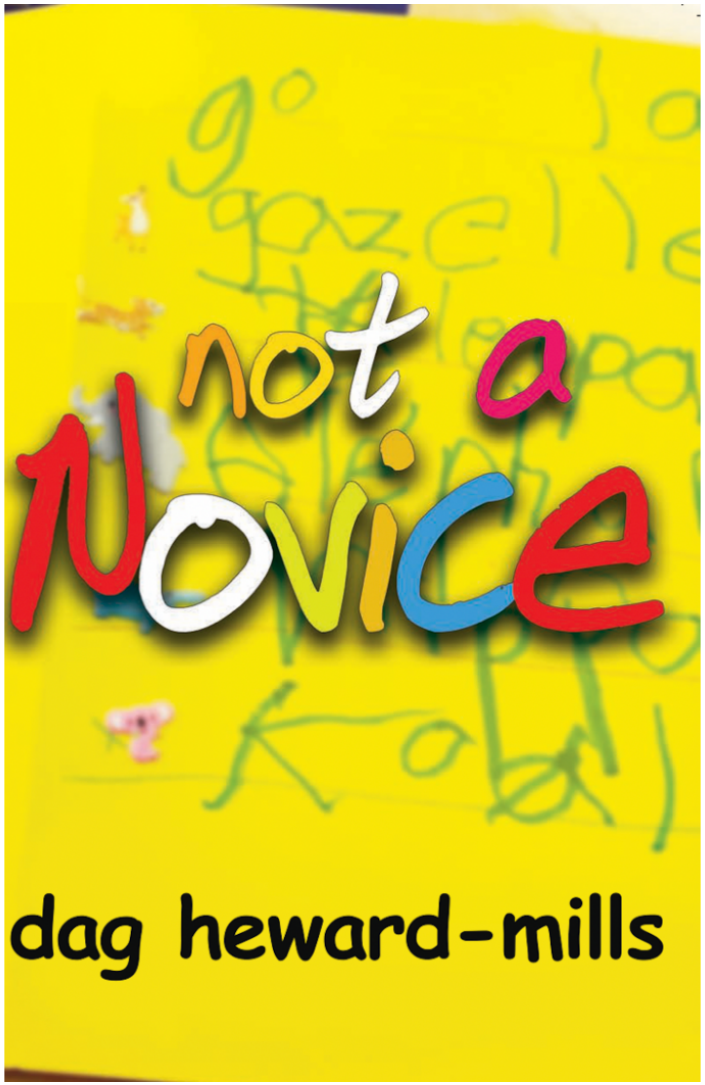
not a
Novice
dag heward-mills

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CHAPTER 1
The First Novice

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:6

Being a novice means being new. It means you are a beginner.

Lucifer was the first novice who fell into pride. Lucifer was a novice who was condemned because of his pride! Lucifer fell into "The condemnation of the devil". The condemnation of the devil! It is the pride of a novice that causes someone to lift himself up against authorities that have been established for years.

As far as dealing with Almighty God, Lucifer was a beginner. Almighty God is from everlasting to everlasting. Jehovah is the Ancient of days.

Lucifer, on the other hand, was created and appointed. The mountains were created by God! The mountain of fire was created by God. Lucifer was also a created angel!

Lucifer vaunted himself against our great eternal Father! It is only a novice who would think of attacking Almighty God. Most novices are deceived and think more highly of themselves than they should. Most novices have a problem of presumption. They do not know who they are in relation to the older and more experienced person. People who attack their superiors often underestimate their experience, wisdom and knowledge.

Lucifer should have had a proper estimate of himself in relation to God. That was the great mistake of Lucifer! How great is our God! How great is His name! Lucifer was new to the world and yet he did not appreciate the greatness of our God who created him and ordained him. He did not appreciate the greatness of God who had existed from everlasting to everlasting.

How Great Is Our God!

The Almighty God has existed for all time. He is the Lord God Almighty, the everlasting Lord. God is not someone newly appointed or newly created. There is nothing about God that makes Him new. We are the ones who are making new discoveries every day. Let us look at a few points that show the greatness of God.

1. Almighty God is the Ancient of Days.

Until THE ANCIENT OF DAYS came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

Daniel 7:22

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to THE ANCIENT OF DAYS, and they brought him near before him.

Daniel 7:13

2. God is from everlasting to everlasting. Think about that! Everlasting extending all the way to everlasting! That is really a long time.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING, thou art God.

Psalm 90:2

3. God is throughout all generations.

I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations.

Psalm 102:24

4. God laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of his Hands.

"Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.

Psalm 102:25

5. God's going forth is from old, from everlasting.

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:2

6. God is the everlasting Father.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

Jesus, the humble one, was there right at the beginning. He was there when everything was created. He was in the beginning with God. Everything we see and know was created by Him. Nothing was created without Jesus. And yet Jesus was the humble and eternal Son of God who obeyed His father, even to the point of death on the cross.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. THE SAME WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:1-3

The First Novice to be Condemned

Lucifer had existed only for as long as he was created. Lucifer was newly appointed and newly created. There is nothing about Lucifer that made him like God. Let us look at a few points that show who Lucifer was.

1. Lucifer was created as one of the angels! Lucifer was not in the beginning with God. He was created at a point in time.

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that THOU WAST CREATED, till iniquity was found in thee.

Ezekiel 28:15

2. Lucifer was ordained into service! Lucifer was not there at the beginning. After Lucifer's creation, he was anointed into his role as a cherub.

You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ORDAINED YOU. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.

Ezekiel 28:14 (NIV)

3. Lucifer was placed on the mountain!

You were the anointed cherub who covers, AND I PLACED YOU THERE. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

Ezekiel 28:14 (NASB)

4. Lucifer was given special privileges!

You were the anointed cherub. I placed you on the mountain of God. YOU STROLLED IN MAGNIFICENCE among the stones of fire.

Ezekiel 28:14 (MSG)

Lucifer had the amazing privilege of walking in the midst of the stones of fire. He strolled among the fiery stones of God.

5. Lucifer was very attractive!

Your heart was lifted up because you were beautiful, you made your wisdom evil through your sin: I have sent you down, even to the earth; I have made you low before kings, so that they may see you.

Ezekiel 28:17 (BBE)

Anyone who saw him would be moved by his magnificence, his charm and his striking eye-catching features. You will notice how most satanic things have these attractive features. Most demonic things are magnificent, charming and eye-catching.

6. One day, Lucifer sinned in his heart because of his beauty.

YOUR BEAUTY WENT TO YOUR HEAD. You corrupted wisdom by using it to get worldly fame. I threw you to the ground, sent you sprawling before an audience of kings and let them gloat over your demise.

Ezekiel 28:17 (MSG)

Lucifer's beauty went to his head. We know that he was not there in the beginning. He was created at a point. He was anointed into his role. He was placed on a mountain. All these experiences were new to him. The Ancient of Days and the one who is from everlasting to everlasting watched how Lucifer's beauty, appeal, charm and attractiveness went to his head.

7. Lucifer was thrown down because of his sin of pride.

Your rich commerce led you to violence, and you sinned. SO I BANISHED YOU IN DISGRACE FROM THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD. I EXPELLED YOU, O MIGHTY GUARDIAN, FROM YOUR PLACE AMONG THE STONES OF FIRE. . . .

You defiled your sanctuaries with your many sins and your dishonest trade. So I brought fire out from within you, and it consumed you. I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching.

Ezekiel 28:16, 18 (NLT)

Lucifer was a novice. He was dealing with the Ancient of Days, the everlasting Father and the one who is from everlasting to everlasting. This newly created, newly anointed creature dared to lift himself up against God's authority. Lucifer was therefore expelled, banished and reduced to ashes.

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:6

It is the pride of a novice that causes him to lift himself up against authorities that have been established for years. You will notice these same patterns in other novices that are destroyed by their pride. They are striking, fascinating, exciting and attractive people. Many are impressed with them. They are new to ministry and they are new to their roles. Sooner or later, they lift themselves up and act carelessly or speak carelessly against God's servant.

CHAPTER 2

The Pride of a Novice

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:6

What is a novice?

1. A novice is a person who is new to the circumstances.
2. A novice is a person who is new to the work.
3. A novice is a beginner.
4. A novice is a minister who has been received for a period of probation.
5. A novice is someone who has been doing a job for only a short period of time.
6. A novice is a person without much experience.
7. A novice is a person recently entered into a condition.
8. A novice is a newly imported person.
9. A novice is a recently discovered person.

The Pride of a Novice

The pride of a novice is worthy of extra attention. This is because a novice is known for his pride, for which he is condemned. Paul warned Timothy that novices would fall because of their pride. A novice falls in the same way that Lucifer fell. Lucifer fell from overconfidence. Lucifer fell from unholy and unfortunate ambitions to ascend to the throne of God. Lucifer fell because he forgot that he had been appointed to have the experiences that he was enjoying.

Lucifer fell from a lack of intelligence caused by pride. For a created angel to imagine that he could ascend the throne of God His Creator and remove Him, we see a blindness and a madness combined with a gross lack of intelligence. Pride causes this blindness, madness and lack of intelligence. Pride created madness and lunacy in an otherwise beautiful creature. This is what will happen to every novice who does not take heed to the numerous warnings about pride in the ministry.

It is sad to see a truly anointed and chosen vessel destroyed with pride marked by blindness, madness and failed intelligence. My prayer is that you will take these few points on the pride of a novice with all seriousness, lest you live to fulfil every single point in this book to your own undoing and condemnation.

1. THE PRIDE OF A NOVICE: OVERCONFIDENCE

Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men:

And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:

AND THEY GATHERED THEMSELVES TOGETHER AGAINST MOSES AND AGAINST AARON, AND SAID UNTO THEM, YE TAKE TOO MUCH UPON YOU, SEEING ALL THE CONGREGATION ARE HOLY, EVERY ONE OF THEM, AND THE LORD IS AMONG THEM: WHEREFORE THEN LIFT YE UP YOURSELVES ABOVE THE CONGREGATION OF THE LORD?

And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face:

Numbers 16:1-4

Overconfidence is one of the marks of the pride of a novice. Thank God for faith, hope and love! These three things breed confidence in a Christian, and it is good to be confident in the Lord. However, pride leads to overconfidence. Over time, your pride can grow into overconfidence.

When people fall into sin, there comes a time when they become proud. At its end stage, every sin gets complicated by pride.

When thieves become infected with pride, they become overconfident as they go about stealing and cheating people. This pride in a thief makes him overconfident and causes him to make mistakes that lead to his capture.

When fornication is infected with pride, the fornicator becomes overconfident and makes mistakes that lead to his being discovered, uncovered and judged.

When criticism is infected with pride, the critical person develops an evil overconfidence and over-steps his boundaries, resulting in behaviour similar to Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

The overconfidence of Korah is revealed in the kind of things he said to Moses.

Korah told Moses that he was not the only holy or special person in the camp. “We are all holy,” he told Moses. “Stop trying to make yourself different or special.” He rebuked Moses for having the spirit of pride and lifting himself up above the congregation.

These are painful words that were meted out to Moses. The overconfidence of Korah was his undoing. Perhaps, there was some truth in the words of Korah. Perhaps, Moses was not the only holy person in the nation of Israel. Perhaps Moses was elevated in a way that no one else was elevated. But that gave no right to Korah to speak the way he did to Moses.

The meekness of a true servant of God can be misleading to a novice. He may think that the prophet of God is in error and is actually apologetic for being caught in his error.

One day, I called for a young man, a minister, who had been dismissed from his job in the ministry. He refused to come and gave a cock and bull story as to why he could not come. He wrongly assumed that I was apologetic for certain things I had said. On the contrary, I meant every word that I had said. But I wanted to prevent his destruction through hurt and bitterness. I wanted to minister to him as a pastor and help prevent his destruction. Unfortunately, he completely misread my gesture. He told someone that I had called him to beg him.

Perhaps the meekness of Moses inspired Korah, Dathan and Abiram to make more vitriolic and provocative statements. But they were wrong because in such matters only God can justify and reveal who is right and who is wrong.

I predict that with time, modern day Korahs, Dathans and Abirams will be revealed and exposed. Their judgment will be with a supernatural component for all to see. All our words and all our wisdom will be judged before the courts of heaven where goodness and truth are in abundance.

Do not be a foolishly overconfident novice. It is time to mature. It is time to be humble!

2. THE PRIDE OF A NOVICE: REBUKING ELDERS

> And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, we will not come up:
>
> IS IT A SMALL THING THAT THOU HAST BROUGHT US UP OUT OF A LAND THAT FLOWETH WITH MILK AND HONEY, TO KILL US IN THE WILDERNESS, EXCEPT THOU MAKE THYSELF ALTOGETHER A PRINCE OVER US?
>
> MOREOVER THOU HAST NOT BROUGHT US INTO A LAND THAT FLOWETH WITH MILK AND HONEY, OR GIVEN US INHERITANCE OF FIELDS AND VINEYARDS: WILT THOU PUT OUT THE EYES OF THESE MEN? WE WILL NOT COME UP.
>
> And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.
>
> Numbers 16:12-15

A novice is filled with indignation at the perceived wrongs of his fathers, uncles, elders and all those in authority. Nathan and Abiram, who were sons of Eliab, were novices in the things of God. They were incensed against Moses and brought what seemed to be a legitimate accusation.

All the things they said against Moses were true, to some extent.

They had been taken out of Egypt, which seemed to be flowing with milk and honey, when compared with the wilderness. To some extent, the Israelites felt a threat of death on many occasions in the wilderness.

Thousands of people had died in the wilderness since Moses led them out of Egypt. Many people had died in this adventure in the wilderness. Dathan and Abiram were accusing Moses of trying to kill them all in the wilderness. Their accusations had some merits.

Indeed, Dathan and Abiram were right when they said, “Thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey.” They continued, “Thou has not given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards.” They now asked Moses a legitimate question: “Will you put out the eyes of these men?” In other words, do you want to blind us even further?

Dathan and Abiram declared boldly, “We will not come to you, Moses. You are a source of death. Too many people have died following you. We will not come up.”

Indeed, a novice is quick to accuse the elder, the prophet and the pastor. The words of Dathan and Abiram seemed to be true. They seemed to have a legitimate reason for their rejection of Moses’ leadership. They rebuked Moses squarely for causing the deaths of thousands in the wilderness. They rebuked Moses for not fulfilling the word of God. They rebuked Moses for not accomplishing his set tasks and goals.

A novice is filled with indignation because he knows only a part of the truth. He understands

only a part of the story. Perhaps he does not know his history! Perhaps he does not remember his history! People who forget history often speak like fools.

A novice will say, "I am embarking on a revolution to correct the wrongs and the ills in the church leadership." A novice is incensed just like the sons of Eliab were. Watch out O revolutionary! You cannot revolt against the Lord and His anointed without paying a high price for it.

Notice this prophetic scripture: "Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought" (Isaiah 41:11-12).

Even though Dathan and Abiram seemed to be saying the right things, they were wrong. If you go deeper, you will find out that thousands of people died, in the wilderness because of their sin (Exodus 32) and not because of Moses' failure at good leadership.

You will find out that the delay in accomplishing the goal of reaching the Promised Land was because of the murmuring of people like Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 14:23-35). The accusation of Dathan and Abiram was about to boomerang and strike back at them.

They had released a snake against Moses, hoping that the snake would bite Moses and he would die. But the snake would turn around in the middle of the way and return to bite Dathan and Abiram. So shall it be to all those who rise up to rebuke their fathers, their pastors and their prophets. The same poisonous snakes that they released against their fathers shall bite them. The snake shall be charmed and enchanted and shall return mysteriously to the mouth and the stomach, from where it was released. It shall bite the feet of the novice that exalted himself against his father who laid hands on him. The venom and the poison will rise up in his blood and will ascend through his legs and his stomach and his chest, until is has entered his head. Finally, the poison shall enter his brain and his eyes shall be closed in the sleep of death.

You can see the response of Almighty God to Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Their words, though seeming to contain truth, were nonsense in the presence of God. Almighty God disposed of them with one swipe. Their words, their accusations, their allegations and their denunciation of Moses did not count. They had no value before the God of truth. The God who sees in secret knows what is true and what is just. Death came to these men who did not fear to rebuke the prophet, Moses. Read it for yourself:

And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me.

But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth,

and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation (Numbers 16:25-33).

3. THE PRIDE OF A NOVICE: STRIFE

Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

Proverbs 13:10

A novice can fall into pride easily and this pride is shown by contention and quarrelling. One day two young pastors were involved in a subliminal conflict. These pastors were working together in the same church. Somehow, there was always some contention. Even the church members began to feel the tension between the pastors. When matters got to a head, I spoke to the junior of the two. I said to him, "You must stop having this contention and strife in the church." I pointed out to him that he was proud because he was a novice. He was a new recruit. He had recently been promoted. He was new in the job.

Initially, he did not think he was proud. Neither did he think that he was the source of the contention. Then I pointed out Proverbs 13:10 to him. Only by pride comes contention! In other words, there is no other way that there would be contention unless there was pride. As soon as he saw the scripture, he capitulated. He sat back and thought through my presentation.

I am glad to say that he "withdrew his horses" and the conflict in the church came to an abrupt end. The spirit of pride manifests as contention and quarrelling. If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living a peaceful life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom.

One of the most important verses you must remember is: **"Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom" (Proverbs 13:10).**

Mature out of conflicts! Have no contention! Have no one in your life with whom you have a quarrel. Live peaceably with all men. That is wisdom and that is humility. You must only have conflict with people who, like Adolf Hitler, bring the war to your doorstep, making it unavoidable for you to fight back and defend yourself.

4. THE PRIDE OF A NOVICE: LACKING THE INTELLIGENCE OF HUMILITY

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the HUMILITY THAT COMES FROM WISDOM.

James 3:13 (NLT)

Humility is a sign of wisdom and intelligence. The scripture above speaks about the humility that comes from wisdom. A novice lacks this kind of wisdom and intelligence. Humility is today recognized as one of the hallmarks of intelligence. The connection between humility and intelligence is seen in the book of James. Research has also shown that there is a direct correlation between intelligence and humility. Proud people with higher IQs have been found to get lower marks in examinations. Humble people with lower IQs have been shown to perform better in school and in examinations.

When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

Proverbs 11:2

A humble person is peaceful. It is wise to be peaceful. A humble person is flowing, yielding, obeying and agreeable. Such personalities are much more likeable than the stiff-necked, stubborn and unyielding variant. Nobody likes stiff-necked people. Nobody falls in love with a stubborn person. No one is attracted to a difficult person who lacks a basic understanding about basic things. The pride of a person causes him to be rejected over and over again whilst humility causes doors to swing open and stay open.

Humility puts a certain grace upon your life. Grace is unmerited favour and assistance. Humble people are characterized by a certain divine assistance and divine favour. This makes their lives easier with fewer sharp rocks and stumbling stones. Notice how the scripture promises the grace of God to a humble person. "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

Humility is indeed a display of intelligence. Humility is a display of superior wisdom that comes from above. The King James Version calls it the "meekness of wisdom." Other Bible versions call it the "humility of wisdom".

When a novice is hard and difficult, he is showing that he is not as intelligent as he could be. You are not going to get far in life with your hardness and your stubbornness. Pray for genuine humility. When you are genuinely humble, you will be genuinely liked, chosen and promoted. Pride comes before a fall! Humility comes before promotion. Humble yourself and God will lift you up!

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

James 4:10

5. THE PRIDE OF A NOVICE: UNFORTUNATE AMBITIONS

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I WILL ASCEND into heaven, I WILL EXALT my throne above the stars of God: I WILL SIT also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I WILL ASCEND above the heights of the clouds; I WILL BE like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

Isaiah 14:12-15

Lucifer had unfortunate ambitions. The ambitions of his heart came out clearly in his statements of unholy ambition. *I will ascend! I will exalt! I will sit! I will be like!* Even though Lucifer said these things in his heart, they were as real as though he had spoken them out. God knows your heart and knows what you are thinking. Your pride may not be expressed openly but it is read clearly by the Lord.

The pride of a novice will lead him to have unholy and unfortunate ambitions. "I am gonna be a star!" "I am going to be rich. I am going to take over the whole world." "I am going to marry that man at all costs." "I am going to have that woman, whatever it takes."

Many novices do not know that they would be better off being the toe of an elephant than the head of an ant. It would take a million ants to make up one toe of an elephant. Because of unholy and unfortunate ambitions, people break away from churches and try to set up camp nearby. You must be sure that God has called you to be an apostle before you start out on your own. If God has

not called you to start a church on your own, you would be better off being a part of a denomination.

One time I went to a remote part of my country to conduct a crusade. During the crusade, we had a pastors' conference. As I preached, the Lord showed me the power of a denomination. I realised that there were hardly any independent churches in that town. There was no founder of a church in that pastors' conference. No one had been able to come to that town to start a church. The town was so remote and the living conditions were such that a single man with a vision would find it very difficult to start, survive and flourish over there.

Only big and strong churches had been able to set up missions in that town. They were churches that belonged to huge and strong denominations. The Methodists, the Anglicans, the Pentecost Church and the Roman Catholics were present and had a great influence in that town. God showed me the power of these denominations. Young independent ministries did not exist simply because they could not and would not survive. As you can see, it was better to be part of a denomination than to be an independent leader in that town.

You must not have unfortunate ambitions to be something that you are not called to be. You must have ambitions to serve God and ambitions to be in His will. One day I spoke to a young man who told me, "I like money! I want to be rich. That is my ambition." His life was heading nowhere, until Jesus changed his ambition. Today, he has an ambition to serve the Lord and to build the church of God.

6. THE PRIDE OF A NOVICE: NOT VALUING CLOSENESS

> **BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOM THOU CHOOSEST, AND CAUSEST TO APPROACH unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.**
>
> **Psalm 65:4**

A novice does not know how important it is to be close. Inexperienced people do not value closeness. The disciples discovered that their closeness to Jesus was everything. When Jesus went to heaven, the disciples discovered that they were just fishermen. They discovered their true state when Jesus was separated from them.

> There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.
>
> John 21:2-3

Also, they discovered that they were not even successful with their secular work without Jesus. Without Jesus they caught nothing. With Jesus, they caught a multitude of fish which they could not draw into the ship.

Dear friend, do not be a novice. Grow quickly in your understanding of how things work. Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5). Without Jesus we can do nothing. And that is true!

Closeness to God is good for you. Closeness to the one whom God has sent you to is essential.

Laban recognized that he was blessed because he was close to Jacob. He did not know what mysterious blessing followed Jacob but he recognized that everything changed when it was under the hand of Jacob, his nephew. "And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake" (Genesis 30:27).

It is interesting how non-believers recognize supernatural help because of the presence of a person. Potiphar's house was blessed because of Joseph's presence in the house. Read it for yourself: "And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that THE LORD BLESSED THE EGYPTIAN'S HOUSE FOR JOSEPH'S SAKE; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field." (Genesis 39:5). As you can see, the blessing on the house of Potiphar was because of Joseph's presence.

A novice thinks that he prospers because he works hard. But there are many people that work hard and do not prosper. A novice thinks that he prospers because he is educated, intelligent and cultured. However, an experienced man knows that there are many people who work hard and who are equally educated but do not prosper. It takes experience and humility to recognize that your closeness to somebody is the reason for your blessing.

This is why most breakaway pastors and rebels are young and inexperienced men who feel they are just as good as their leader.

7. THE PRIDE OF A NOVICE: STOPS LEARNING AFTER HIS APPOINTMENT

> **And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. But they and our fathers DEALT PROUDLY, AND HARDENED THEIR NECKS, AND HEARKENED NOT TO THY COMMANDMENTS**
>
> **Nehemiah 9:14-16**

A novice stops learning as soon as he can. The more experienced you are, the more you will desire to continue learning. Today, after thirty years of ministry, I so desire to find a book that will bless me. I so desire to find time to read my Bible and get blessed one more time. A novice on the other hand thinks to himself, "I have heard that already! I have read that book already!"

A novice thinks to himself, "I know what he is going to say. I know what he talks about." A novice says, "I understand, I understand" but does not really understand.

> And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; BECAUSE THINE HEART WAS TENDER, AND THOU DIDST HUMBLE THYSELF BEFORE GOD, WHEN THOU HEARDEST HIS WORDS against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.
>
> 2 Chronicles 34:26-28

It is important that you humble yourself before the word of God. It is important to have a tender heart so that you are meek and lowly before any preaching, any teaching and any book that God wants to bring your way.

Notice in the scripture above that your heart must be tender and humble when you hear the word of God. If you say things like “I know this message”, “I know him”, “I have heard that before”. “This is the same as the last message. He has just changed the title.” “We know his topics: it is either shepherding or loyalty.” Such statements reveal the pride of a novice. Decide to be one of the humble servants of the Lord.

CHAPTER 3

The Purification of a Novice

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. AND LET THESE ALSO FIRST BE PROVED; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

1 Timothy 3:6-10

What is a novice?

1. A novice is a person who is new to the circumstances.
2. A novice is a person who is new to the work.
3. A novice is a beginner.
4. A novice is a minister who has been received for a period of probation.
5. A novice is someone who has been doing a job for only a short period of time.
6. A novice is a person without much experience.
7. A novice is a person recently entered into a condition.
8. A novice is a newly imported person.
9. A novice is a recently discovered person.

1. A NOVICE MUST BE PURIFIED, PURGED AND MADE WHITE

> And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. AND SOME OF THEM OF UNDERSTANDING SHALL FALL, TO TRY THEM, AND TO PURGE, AND TO MAKE THEM WHITE, EVEN TO THE TIME OF THE END: because it is yet for a time appointed.
>
> Daniel 11:33-35

Tests are to purify you of unwanted things. Removing impurities of the spirit from your life is very important for becoming God's special servant. We are born in sin, corruption and wickedness. There are many unwanted aspects of our personalities and lives. If we do not remove these impurities, God will remove them for us. The seed of the serpent is in the human race. The seed is the word. Satan has spoken a word into Adam and that seed has germinated to produce an evil race of wicked beings.

Across the world, human beings are lying, stealing, betraying one another, cheating one another, defrauding one another, fighting one another, opposing one another, undermining one

another and harming one another. The human race is like a herd of mad buffaloes that are attacking each other for no apparent reason.

It is such wicked people who are saved and get called to the ministry. When you are in the ministry, you will find out that you are still a human being full of wickedness and shameful traits.

A novice, an inexperienced minister, and will definitely come into the ministry with unwanted characteristics. Most of the unwanted characteristics of our lives are invisible personality and character problems. We are encouraged to cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and the spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1). There is a lot of filth and rot in our spirits, souls and hearts.

Through the purging, cleansing and testing experiences, we will experience a purification that makes us more qualified to be in God's presence. Many novices shall be purified, and made white, and tried by the fires of experiences that God allows. It is important that you understand that experiences are purifying you of many invisible negative traits.

> MANY SHALL BE PURIFIED, AND MADE WHITE, AND TRIED; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.
>
> Daniel 12:10

2. A NOVICE IS PURIFIED TO MAKE HIM ZEALOUS

> **Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and PURIFY unto himself a peculiar people, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.**
>
> **Titus 2:14**

Purification takes place so that you will be zealous of good works. You have been set aside for good works. Without zeal, without a drive, without a strong determination and without inexorability you will not be able to do the good works God has determined for you to do.

Expect to have some terrible experiences that will bump you out of slowness, lateness, lethargy and gradualness. God is trying to purify you of negative phlegmatic tendencies.

In my experience, many pastors have a phlegmatic personality. Many pastors do not have a drive. Many leaders lack the fervour, the keenness and the enthusiasm that is needed for ministry. Also, many ministers are older people who have lost the eagerness, the passion, the hunger and the thirst for more of God.

As people get older, it is not only their bodies that age. Their feelings, their passion, their enthusiasm, fanaticism, vehemence, fervour, eagerness, ardour, keenness and intensity also grow older.

Indeed, there are some people who experience very little change in their bodies, as they grow older. You can find some older men who look the same as they looked when they were teenagers. There are also older women whose bodies are exactly the same as when they were twenty-one years old.

However, if you go a little closer, you will find out that their attitudes have changed. Their outlook on life, their thoughts, their feelings and their mind-sets are hardened and resistant. You cannot squeeze much joy, happiness, excitement and enthusiasm out of these hardened ones. This hardening takes place with age.

If God is going to use you, you will need to be purified of this hardening. You will need to be cleansed of resistance to change, resistance to new things and resistance to youthfulness. There are many young people who are not youthful in their outlook. They have adopted a premature ageing syndrome as their default posture.

To work with God you need to be young in your outlook, in your attitude, and your approach to things. Gradual hardening leads to many dangerous conditions that are detrimental to spiritual growth and happy marriages.

Purification is necessary so that the stiffening of your neck as well as your sense of entitlement will give way to the yieldedness and humility of the Holy Spirit. God will show you many rebukes because you are not youthful. It is not good that words like resistance, hardness, inflexibility and rigidity are used to describe you. Your personality and your temperament need purging.

God will punish you because you are not enthusiastic about Him. That lack of excitement and wholehearted passion is unwanted and unnecessary in a novice. God wants you to serve Him with joy. “Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; “ (Deuteronomy 28:47).

Purification takes place so that we become zealous and ready for good works. By the power of God, you will be purified of your laziness. Phlegmatic people will be purified of their self-righteousness and slowness.

Purification tests are to make us zealous and to make us ready for good works.

3. A NOVICE IS PURIFIED TO MAKE HIM PECULIAR

> **Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and PURIFY unto himself A PECULIAR PEOPLE, zealous of good works.**
>
> **Titus 2:14**

Purification takes place so that you will be peculiar. A novice will undergo some experiences to drive out the tendency to be like everyone else. When God calls you, you will have the tendency to want to be like other ministers. You will want to have the same kind of car that they have and the same kind of ministry that they have.

God has a unique and special journey for you. Paul said at the end of his ministry that he had kept the faith and run his race! Everybody has a special race to run! I may be running a marathon and you may be running a four hundred-metre race. You must make sure that you run your race properly. If you are running a four hundred-metre race you will need to go faster than if you are running a marathon. I may be running in a westerly direction and you may have to run in the northern direction. You must stick to your race!

Many novices have the problem that the young Israeli nation had. They want to be like everyone else! They wanted to be like all the other nations. Do not desire to be like all the others!

> And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us LIKE ALL THE NATIONS.
>
> 1 Samuel 8:5

When you desire to be like others, you are actually rejecting God’s plan. God loves you and has a great plan for you. Instead of desiring God’s plan for your life, you desire to belike everyone

else. Your desiring to be like others is a direct rejection of God in your life. Almighty God made it clear to Samuel that Israel's request to be like other nations meant that they had rejected Him. He told Samuel, "Just do what they want. The truth is that they have rejected me."

> And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.
>
> 1 Samuel 8:7

In a sense, you must not even desire to be like other ministers unless the Lord gives someone to you as a father. If God gives you a master to disciple you, it is a good thing to desire to be like him. "The disciple is not above his master: but ***every one that is perfect shall be as his master.*** " (Luke 6:40) In that case, perfection is when you are like your master. It is good to look up to this master and try to be like him.

You must not work for the respect of men. One of the greatest spiritual problems is to seek to be like other men. "I receive not honour from men" (John 5:41). Many pastors seek to get their respect from men.

The respect of men and the respect of the world is a great trap. Ministers who seek to please the people, please the masses, please the congregation, please the crowd are dangerous people. Over the years, I have lost good relationships with people because they wanted to please the masses. Whom you please shows whom you love! I felt rejected and spurned when these people did not stand with me in the time of crisis. They tried to please people and ended up losing my friendship.

4. A NOVICE IS PURIFIED FROM SIN

> Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. PURGE ME WITH HYSSOP, AND I SHALL BE CLEAN: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
>
> Psalm 51:5-7

A novice must be purified of his sins. A novice will experience purging. There are sins that may not go out of our lives through preaching and studying the Word. Sometimes, painful encounters, difficult and sad experiences will work to drive out certain things from your life. The first sin that will go out of your life through the purging is pride. Looking down on others, disapproving of people, speaking judgmentally, criticizing harshly and condemning boldly are signs of a novice at work.

You may even have to fall into sin to understand the mystery of iniquity. Like David, God's favourite king, you may understand that you were "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin" only after you sin yourself. After the experience of Bathsheba, David asked to be purged and purified. He wrote the fifty-first psalm after his experience with Bathsheba, when Nathan the prophet rebuked him.

It is common to hear novices speaking disparagingly about sin in other people's lives. A novice is often found speaking unsympathetically about the mess and sin that others commit. When you become mature, you will be more quiet about people's shortcomings. Instead of giving disapproving and judgmental speeches, you will be more prayerful and introspective.

A novice is often not aware that the church is built by priests who are equally sinful men. Pastors, leaders, bishops, priests were also conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. When I was a child, I thought like a child!

When you become a man, you will find the need for love and charity. Charity does not take into account a wrong suffered. Love bears all things, hopes all things and endures all things! As a novice becomes a man, he will find himself suffering wrongs, bearing all things, enduring all things, hoping all things and believing that good can come out of the worst of sinners.

5. A NOVICE IS PURIFIED TO INCREASE HIS VALUE

> **I will bring that group through the fire and make them pure. I will refine them like silver and purify them like gold. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'These are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God'.**
>
> **Zechariah 13:9 (NLT)**

A novice must be tested with fire! The reason why a novice must be tested with fire is because the fire will confirm whether he is really gold. Refining with a flame is one of the oldest methods of refining metals. The craftsman sits next to the fire under the pot of molten gold. As the fire burns, the molten gold bubbles and the goldsmith stirs the pot. As he stirs the pot, impurities in the gold come to the top of the bubbling molten gold.

The goldsmith then skims the top of the molten gold and removes the impurities. As the impurities are removed, the gold is refined and becomes more pure and valuable. Anyone who buys a piece of that gold will not be getting a whole lot of impurities and waste products.

Gold is valued by its purity. Twenty-four karat gold is the purest gold you can have. Because pure twenty-four karat gold is soft, it is mixed with another metal to make it harder. So if your jewellery is eighteen karat gold, it means it is eighteen parts gold and usually six parts of copper. After gold has been purified, it is more valuable. It is worthy of a higher price. As you can see, gold is valued by its level of purity. The more purified you are, the more valuable you are to God!

This is what God is doing with your life! He is putting you through fire. The fire is causing the impurities to be separated from the pure gold. The impurities of your life, the waste products of your life, the wickedness of your life, the immoralities of your life and the evils in your life will come bubbling to the surface. Soon, they will be skimmed off and you will become a far more valuable person than you used to be.

I am sure it is not easy for the gold when it is under the fire. Expect fire in your life! Expect tests in your life! Expect tribulations! Expect humiliating experiences! It is God's fire purifying you as gold. When you are tested and purified, you will be a far more valuable person.

Purification and testing is sometimes the only way to make a novice more valuable.

An aeroplane, which has been built at the cost of forty-five million dollars, is valueless to you when it has not been tested. Would you like to be the first passenger to sit on a plane that has never gone up into the air? Do you not realise that aeroplanes have to be tested to be sure that they can actually take off and land? That is why we have test pilots! These test pilots take the plane that has been assembled into the air for the very first time. They test the plane's abilities in the air.

I once watched an aeroplane being tested in Europe. On its very first flight, the plane simply refused to go up in the air. It took off but would not rise more than twenty metres above the

ground. It flew straight into a forest that was near the runway. The plane had on board journalists and winners of a raffle who were there to report on its performance. After watching this crash, I began to value test pilots!

I am sure that you would not want to be on the next test flight that is testing an aircraft for the first time. I am sure that you would want to sit on a well-tested aircraft to be sure that everything is working.

God wants to have pastors and ministers who have been well-tested. It is nice that you want to be in the ministry. It is nice that you have given your life to be on the mission field.

But get ready for fire! After the fire, you will be more qualified to have people under you. After the fire, you will be more qualified to control money. After the fire, you will have a higher rank.

6. A NOVICE IS PURIFIED TO MAKE HIM READY FOR A CROWN

> Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: THAT THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH, BEING MUCH MORE PRECIOUS THAN OF GOLD THAT PERISHETH, THOUGH IT BE TRIED WITH FIRE, MIGHT BE FOUND UNTO PRAISE AND HONOUR AND GLORY at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:
>
> 1 Peter 1:6-8

Not everyone is worthy to wear a crown. Are you worthy to be a king?

A novice is tested to get him ready to be presented with praise, honour and glory. This is for your heavenly presentation before the Father. You will be praised because of how you are. You will be honoured for the tests you have survived. You will have glory for the tests you have endured.

The test itself is a precious experience to God. When children are going through examinations it affects their parents.

> **Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.**
>
> **Revelation 2:10**

CHAPTER 4

What a Novice Must Learn Quickly

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:6

What is a Novice?

1. A novice is a person who is new to the circumstances
2. A novice is a person who is new to the work
3. A novice is a beginner.
4. A novice is a minister who has been received for a period of probation.
5. A novice is someone who has been doing a job for only a short period of time.
6. A novice is a person without much experience.
7. A novice is a person recently entered into a condition.
8. A novice is a newly imported person.
9. A novice is a recently discovered person.

Many characters in the Bible exemplify the dangerous temptations of a novice. A newly inducted person must beware that he does not fall into certain common traps that are laid for novices. The ultimate fall of a novice is from pride. However, a number of things lead to pride in a novice. Some of these things would not lead to pride in a more experienced person.

In another chapter, we will see how similar circumstances could not destroy those who were experienced. Novices are susceptible to certain temptations, tests and trials. If you are new in the ministry, you must be alert that you do not fall into the temptations that are common to novices.

1. A NOVICE MUST QUICKLY LEARN THAT INDEPENDENCE DOES NOT MEAN GREATNESS.

Many independent nations are highly indebted and poor countries. **Adam and Eve were novices. They were tempted with independence. A novice will perceive his independence as an opportunity for greatness.**

Adam encountered the devil in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were swept off their feet by one encounter with the devil. Remember that Jesus Christ was called the second Adam. The first Adam was new to the Garden of Eden. He encountered the devil who was not new to the Garden of Eden. Satan had been in the Garden of Eden before.

> Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.
>
> THOU HAST BEEN IN EDEN THE GARDEN OF GOD; every precious stone was thy

covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

Ezekiel 28:12-13

You must understand that there was a creation of some sort before the six-day creation in which man was created and placed in the Garden of Eden. Certain places are not mentioned in the creation. For instance, there is no mention of the creation of hell or the lake of fire in the six-day creation story. These places must have been created before. There is also no mention of the creation of angels. Obviously, these things must have been created before the six days in which God created Adam and Eve. Remember that at the end of the creation of what we know, God said it was good.

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Genesis 1:31

He was not saying that hell and Hades were good places. These had already been created and set aside. In other words, many things had gone on long before Adam and Eve came on the scene. They were absolute novices in a garden that they did not know how it came about. They encountered the devil that was there earlier and had seen much more. Some creatures were privileged to witness the laying of the foundations of the world.

WHERE WAST THOU WHEN I LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE EARTH? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof;

When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Job 38:4-7

Adam and Eve gave themselves to the devil when they agreed to taste the fruit of the tree. They obeyed the devil and came under his power. There are two things that worked on these novices: the temptation to be great and the temptation to be independent.

The sound of those words, “You will be like gods” (Genesis 3:5) rang in the hearts of Adam and Eve. We will be even greater than we are! We will be like God himself. We will not need God any more. We can do our own thing. We can be established on our own and determine our own salaries. God will not tell us what to do any more! God will not control us any more! God will not micromanage our lives any more! Such ideas are tantalizing to a novice.

When Jesus was presented with the same ideas, He dismissed them immediately. Jesus Christ was not a novice. Jesus was in the beginning with God. Everything was created by Him and with Him. Without Him was not anything made that was made!

Suggesting to Jesus Christ that He should bow down to the devil just to be in charge of a few cities on earth was the most ludicrous suggestion to an experienced person. Suggesting to Jesus to jump off a mountain was, to say the least, ridiculous, preposterous and foolish.

Suggesting to Jesus to turn stones into bread, just because He was hungry, was nonsensical. He dismissed the devil immediately. A novice may have fallen to these suggestions. There is a difference between a novice and an experienced person.

2. A NOVICE MUST QUICKLY LEARN HOW TO OVERCOME TEMPTATIONS FROM WOMEN AND MONEY.

The sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were novices: They were tempted by women and offerings. All ministers will be tempted with women and money.

> And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there.
>
> 1 Samuel 1:3

> Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
>
> And he said unto them, why do ye such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress.
>
> If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.
>
> 1 Samuel 2:22-25

The sons of Eli were two young men who were tempted to fall with the numerous beautiful women that came around to the tabernacle. They were new in the ministry and completely succumbed to the temptation of misusing the offerings and misusing the women.

Eli, on the other hand, had been doing this job for many years. Do you think Eli had not noticed these beautiful women throughout his ministry? Eli was not an asexual creature. He was a warm-blooded sexual man. He had given birth to at least two sons. How did he give birth to these two sons if he was not sexually active?

Yet, for many years, he had interacted with these ladies but had not abused or misused them. Eli had been exposed to huge offerings throughout his ministry. Yet he had not become money minded, nor had he stolen the money. Neither was he misusing all that he had access to. Perhaps, the sons of Eli did not bother to find out from their father how he was able to stay pure for so many years. The Bible teaches that everyone should develop a strategy to control and to keep himself in holiness. Read it for yourself:

> That each of you KNOW HOW TO CONTROL HIS OWN BODY in holiness and honor (being available for God's purpose and separated from things profane).
>
> 1 Thessalonians 4:4 (AMP)

Eli had grown in this knowledge and was able to live without destroying himself with the beautiful ladies that he saw every day. Eli's sons did not understand how Eli was able to work with all those beautiful ladies for years and not sleep with them. When Eli's sons were exposed to the beautiful ladies they just fell flat.

Novices must take time to humbly understudy the fathers who through faith and patience have inherited the promises of God in ministry.

Unfortunately, many novices simply criticize fathers, and thereby are blinded to the secrets and wisdom of their fathers. When a child criticizes and attacks his father, the ravens of the air pluck

out his eyes. The plucking out of the eyes causes blindness!

Someone may say, “I have never seen a raven pluck out anybody’s eyes.” I can also say, “I have never seen birds pluck out the eyes of a living man.” but what is the effect of a raven plucking out the eyes? Blindness!

Indeed, many young ministers are blinded and cannot see what they need to see. They are blinded because spiritual and demonic ravens have inflicted blindness on them. The blindness of a son causes him to become reckless, hasty, unrestrained and self-destructive.

It is important to grow up and learn the wisdom of God through those whom God places just ahead of you. The sons of Eli could have had a different future. Their ministry would have lasted longer. They would have borne much fruit and been listed among the heroes of the Bible. Instead, they received one of the most debilitating and withering curses ever recorded.

3. A NOVICE MUST QUICKLY LEARN WHAT GOOD ADVICE IS.

And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;) That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. And he said unto them, DEPART YET FOR THREE DAYS, THEN COME AGAIN TO ME. And the people departed.

And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?

And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

But HE FORSOOK THE COUNSEL OF THE OLD MEN, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him:

And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter?

And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s loins.

And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, come to me again the third day.

And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men’s counsel that they gave him;

And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord, that he

might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

SO WHEN ALL ISRAEL SAW THAT THE KING HEARKENED NOT UNTO THEM, THE PEOPLE ANSWERED THE KING, SAYING, WHAT PORTION HAVE WE IN DAVID? NEITHER HAVE WE INHERITANCE IN THE SON OF JESSE: TO YOUR TENTS, O ISRAEL: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

THEN KING REHOBOAM SENT ADORAM, WHO WAS OVER THE TRIBUTE; AND ALL ISRAEL STONED HIM WITH STONES, THAT HE DIED. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

1 Kings 12:1-18

Novices are tempted by bad advice. Rehoboam was the successor to King Solomon. Rehoboam was the novice king who took over the massive kingdom that his father, Solomon, had built. Rehoboam had no idea about how his father had maintained control of this vast empire. The novice destroyed everything on the first day of his rule.

Israel was made up of twelve tribes. The human population that made up the nations of Israel was divided into twelve sections. After the first cabinet meeting, eleven of the tribes decided that they would not be subject to this arriviste (an arriviste is a person who has recently acquired unaccustomed status, wealth or success, especially without earning associated respect). Rehoboam lost control of Israel within a week of coming into power.

He did not know what exactly his father did to handle all the old men, the young men and control people that were afar off. It is important to learn how to pick and choose from the suggestions and advice that you receive. Perhaps, one of the greatest jobs of a leader is to know how to discern between the good and the better advice that you receive.

Rehoboam should have listened to the older men's advice.

Rehoboam should have respected the achievements of his father.

Rehoboam should have thought deeply about how great his father was and how many things his father had achieved that most people do not achieve.

Rehoboam should have recognized that there were probably secrets that Solomon used in maintaining control of his kingdom.

Rehoboam should have read the books that Solomon had written. He probably did not read his father's teaching which spoke of "*A king, against whom there is no rising up.*"(Proverbs 30:29-31).

Rehoboam should have read the history of his father, Solomon. He would have learnt how Solomon simply followed the instructions of King David, his father. Rehoboam did not follow any instructions when he became the king. Rehoboam made no mention of his father, Solomon. Rehoboam made no mention of any teachings or advice he had received from his father.

Solomon was the wisest man on earth, and yet he simply followed the instructions of his father. Following the instructions of his father made Solomon gain authority over the land. "So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died. And the

kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon." (1 Kings 2:46)

Rehoboam should have taken time to understand the kind of people that he was leading. The people of Israel were a hard and rebellious group, not so easy to control. The older men had been with Solomon and had watched him control this vast kingdom for many years. Rehoboam had no idea about the strategies that Solomon had used to collect taxes for so many years. Rehoboam was shocked when they stoned and killed Adoram for attempting to collect taxes. This was just the beginning of a rebellion which was to last his lifetime.

4. A NOVICE MUST LEARN THE RULES QUICKLY.

> And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not.
>
> And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.
>
> Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.
>
> And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.
>
> So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said.
>
> And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled.
>
> And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.
>
> Leviticus 10:1-7

Nadab and Abihu were novices: They failed to adapt themselves to the rules of the house. They did not learn the rules of ministry. They did not learn the rule of catching the philosophy and principles of the house.

Nadab and Abihu failed to adapt themselves to the rules, regulations and culture of the priesthood. They did something strange that was unacceptable. This failure to adapt by these two novices is recorded in the Bible so that we learn to adapt to our callings.

A novice must familiarize himself quickly, learn quickly, adjust quickly and modify whatever he knows to suit the authorities.

The sons of Aaron were novices. They did not understand how their father, Aaron had offered sacrifices and worked successfully in the presence of God. Aaron was the famous High Priest of God.

Those who came after Aaron assumed that they knew all about the house of God and how things were done. They made a grave mistake and it cost them their lives.

When you are new, you must find out how things are done. Do not be presumptuous. Do not barge into spaces. Do not enter rooms that you are not invited to. Do not comment about things you do not understand.

Do not live in a way that is not acceptable. One day, I had an employee who decided to get into a relationship with an unbeliever. However, this unbeliever was no ordinary person. She had chosen a member of radical unbelievers. By this relationship, our ministry would be linked to these unbelievers. She simply did not realize that her new relationship was not compatible with the ministry. She wanted to offer up strange fire in the ministry.

Novices offer strange fire because they fail to adapt and learn quickly the culture and the practices and the beliefs of the ministry.

5. A NOVICE MUST QUICKLY LEARN HOW TO STAY IN CONTROL.

> And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.
>
> And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king,
>
> God save the king.
>
> And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Why wentest thou not with thy friend?
>
> And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the Lord, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide.
>
> And again, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence.
>
> Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do.
>
> And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong.
>
> So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.
>
> And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.
>
> 2 Samuel 16:15-23

Absalom was a novice: He failed to stay in control.

A novice is someone who is thrown into an office or a position that he is not accustomed to. A novice is new to the circumstances. Absalom was new to the status of kingship. He was unaccustomed to the wealth, the privileges, the palace and the power. Within a few days, this upstart was removed from the palace. He did not belong there. He was a thief.

Absalom was indeed a novice. He could not stay in the palace for more than one week. He could not handle all the women that his father David had handled for years. He did not work well with Ahithophel, the adviser. He did not distinguish between good and bad advice.

Absalom was filled with pride and fell into the condemnation of the devil. Today, the name Absalom is a negative word that brings up thoughts of rebellion, failure, pride and destruction. God wants to save you and establish you. It is important to find out what the fathers have been doing.

Absalom had to have sex with all the women on the rooftop. King David, his father had had these women with him for years but did not fall into this low state. It is time to find out the secret that has been used and practiced by those whom God chose before you.

6. A NOVICE MUST QUICKLY LEARN WHO TO LISTEN TO.

> One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi spoke to her. She said, "My daughter, shouldn't I try to find a secure place for you? Shouldn't you have peace and rest? Shouldn't I find a home where things will go well with you?
>
> You have been with the female servants of Boaz. He's a relative of ours. Tonight he'll be separating the straw from his barley on the threshing floor.
>
> "So wash yourself. Put on some perfume. And put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor. But don't let Boaz know you are there. Wait until he has finished eating and drinking.
>
> Notice where he lies down. Then go over and uncover his feet. Lie down there. He'll tell you what to do."
>
> "I'll do everything you say," Ruth answered.
>
> Ruth 3:1-5 (NIRV)

Ruth was a novice. Fortunately, she listened to the advice of an experienced woman called Naomi. Even though she was a novice in Bethlehem, she prevailed and ended up becoming the wife of a great man.

Ruth was a real novice. She was new to the city of Bethlehem. She was a Moabite who needed to understand the Jewish culture. She had never been to Bethlehem before. She had never been a young widow before. She didn't know how older Jewish men behaved but she listened to her mother in law and followed her advice.

Her advice was clear, Approach him after he's eaten. Put on some nice clothes. Put on some perfume. I know what will work on a man. Ruth could have considered her mother in law's advice to be unspiritual.

Ruth could have chosen to quote scriptures to Boaz, explaining why he needed to care for widows. Ruth could have chosen to quote Deuteronomy 10:18 to Boaz.

For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment (Deuteronomy 10:17-18).

If Ruth had chosen to quote this scripture, she may never have been married to Boaz and become the great-grandmother of King David.

Ruth could also have chosen to go for younger men whose sperm count would be more guaranteed to produce children. Ruth could also have ignored her mother's advice about having a bath. There are many ladies who scoff when they are advised to bath more often. Some ladies are more conscious of doing their hair, making up and wearing nice dresses than they are of simply bathing often.

It is important to know when you are a novice. When a novice receives advice in all humility, she will do well. Many marriages are condemned before they even start. Many pride filled novices

come to the altar and make vows confidently not knowing that it is going to take more than good ideas to achieve a happy, peaceful and beautiful marriage. Decide to be a novice who listens to advice from an experienced person.

7. A NOVICE MUST QUICKLY LEARN THE IMPORTANCE OF FATHERS.

> And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: FOR ESTHER DID THE COMMANDMENT OF MORDECAI, LIKE AS WHEN SHE WAS BROUGHT UP WITH HIM.
>
> Esther 2:19-20

Esther was a novice. She was counselled by her uncle Mordecai. Mordecai was like a father to her. Everything he told her was the right thing.

Esther was a young, beautiful virgin who was thrown into the limelight by her sudden, unexpected marriage to the king of Persia. How would she behave? Would she last longer than her predecessor? Esther was taking the place of an older mature queen who had lived successfully as a queen for many years.

Esther was marrying a man who could have any number of women he wanted. No woman could vaunt herself against the king. No woman would dare to quarrel or to be proud in the king's presence. Indeed Esther was in for the test of her life. She would have no chance to misbehave at all. One mistake would cost Esther her marriage.

Here, we see the wisdom that produced the Esther we know. Esther became famous because she handled herself very well in her new role.

Because Esther was a novice, she listened to Mordecai, her counsellor. Mordecai counselled Esther before she got married and during her marriage.

Every novice, every newly appointed person, every newcomer, every beginner, every apprentice must desire counsel and hold on to it. Every person who is new to the circumstances of ministry must be humble and learn the survival skills from experienced people.

> **Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.**
>
> **Leviticus 19:32**

8. A NOVICE MUST QUICKLY LEARN NOT TO HAVE WRONG AMBITIONS.

> **And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.**
>
> **But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.**
>
> **Luke 22:24-27**

The apostles were novices: They even the quarrelled about who was to be the greatest. All

ambitions must be Holy Spirit inspired. Satan is the best example of someone with evil ambitions and evil desires. Your plans, purposes and pursuits must be inspired by the Holy Spirit!

The apostles were quarrelling about who was going to be the greatest. Trying to be the greatest is a sign of someone who does not know what is important. It is a sign of inexperience. It is a sign that you have the wrong values.

Do not try to be the greatest. Make it your aim to please the Lord. Pray for humility. Pray that you will be like a child and like a servant. The greatest person in Heaven is the one who is humble like a child.

If you try to have the biggest car, the biggest house, the biggest position, you will go astray and fall into the condemnation of the devil. A novice is someone who falls into pride, which is the condemnation of the devil.

9. A NOVICE MUST QUICKLY LEARN NOT TO BE IMPRESSED WITH FRIVOLOUS THINGS.

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

Luke 10:17-20

The apostles were novices. They were impressed about the wrong things. Many ministers are impressed by the wrong things. I remember a crusade we had. There were many pastors at the leaders' conference the next day. I sensed that many of the pastors were impressed with our convoy of trucks and cars. I also sensed that they were impressed by the amount of money we must have spent to come there.

As I preached, they laughingly confirmed that they had been thinking about how much money we must have as a ministry. I told them to focus on the anointing. They should be impressed with the power of God and the grace of God that had made it possible for us to travel from our country to come to their town and preach. I wanted them to be impressed with the books that had been written and the revelations that were available to them through these books. I wanted them to be impressed with the revelation on how to build a mega church and how to catch the anointing.

Instead of being impressed with the power of God and the miracles that were taking place, their eyes were on the cars, the trucks and the money. Jesus' disciples were equally impressed with the wrong things. A novice must grow to become impressed with truly valuable things.

If you are impressed with the anointing and the power of God, you will pay the price to get it. If you are impressed with money, you will think of how to get money rather than how to get the anointing.

One day, I was watching a great man of God preaching on a video. This man of God was attracting crowds of hundreds of thousands to his crusades. He was surrounded by manifestations of the power of God and great miracles. I was greatly attracted to his ministry and impressed with the power of God that was so abundant in everything he did.

At a point in the video, he declared that he used over two million dollars every five days to sustain his ministry. I was amazed at the amount of money he used for his ministry. But I was even more amazed by the power of God and the sweetness of the Holy Spirit in his ministry. I could not imagine how on earth I would ever come by such monies. But I was not deterred from seeking after the power of the Holy Spirit that was manifested in his ministry. That is what really impressed me! Years have gone by since I watched that video and I can say that I have experienced the power of God that I was impressed with.

I have not experienced that kind of money but I have experienced what I was attracted to. Be careful that you are not drawn to the wrong aspects of someone's ministry. Let the Holy Spirit draw you to the anointing, to the power and to the presence of God. These are invaluable things that have no equal.

A novice is impressed with the wrong things. The apostles were new to the elevated and privileged position that Christ had given them. The apostles were new to the power. They were impressed with the display of power and the manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit. But Jesus wanted them to be more impressed with salvation. Today, many ministers are no longer impressed with the topic of salvation. They consider it too basic to bother with. Jesus did not consider it to be an infantile subject. He considered salvation and the writing of their names in the Book of Life to be more important than the casting out of devils (Luke 10:20).

A novice is impressed with the wrong things. You must mature and value what God values. Years ago, I was not impressed with the topic of humility or love. As time has gone by, I've grown to believe that these are more important than the gifts of the Spirit and the anointing. Paul calls it "A more excellent way."

Jesus saved more people by loving and forgiving us on the cross than He did in the manifestation of healing in the miracle of blind Bartimaeus. Love, forgiveness and humility accomplish more than any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That is why it is called "A more excellent way".

Grow out of being a novice and start being impressed with the things that impress God. God is impressed with humility! God is impressed with love.

10. A NOVICE MUST QUICKLY LEARN ABOUT DECEPTION AND TREACHERY.

> **Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.**
>
> **Luke 22:20-23**

The apostles were novices. They knew nothing about disloyalty and treachery. Human nature is full of deception. Even worse, human nature is full of treachery. With time, you will discover how real deception and treachery are. Deception has to do with being fooled, being deceived, being misled and being cheated. Treachery has to do with being betrayed, encountering dual personalities and experiencing shocks from people you trust.

A novice finds it hard to believe that such evils exist outside of movies. Almost every movie depicts some kind of deception and treachery. There is so much deception and treachery in movies

that we assume it must be something unreal. A novice will come to find out that the things in movies often portray real life situations. The ideas that people have to make films come from real life situations someone has experienced. That is why movies can be a real source of education, depending on how you watch them.

A novice does not know about disloyalty. Once you grow in ministry, you will start to have disloyal people. It is a lack of experience that makes you feel that disloyalty is an unnecessary topic. A pastor once expressed concern for my health because I was preaching about loyalty and disloyalty. He felt there was not need to emphasize on these things.

The disciples were novices. They had no idea that someone among them would betray the Lord. That is why they were asking which of them would do something like that. They could not even imagine what it was like to have a traitor.

The longer you stay in the Lord, the more chances that you will encounter every single personality in the Bible. Expect to meet Judas Iscariot himself. Judas will be someone who is close to you. I know you cannot believe that someone close to you would try to harm you.

You are not greater than Jesus. If Jesus saw treachery from his close quarters, you can expect to see the same. Jesus said that a disciple is perfect when he becomes like his master. When you have experienced deception and treachery and have overcome them, you will be getting nearer perfection. "The disciple is not above his master: *but every one that is perfect shall be as his master*" (Luke 6:40).

One day, I met a pastor who despised my teaching on loyalty and disloyalty. He scoffed at me and said, "It is not necessary to teach about such things." I felt bad that I was teaching about loyalty and disloyalty. I was not sure if I had an evil and quarrelling spirit that made me teach about such things. After some years, I met this same pastor. This time, instead of mocking at my teaching, he had glowing praise for my books and audio messages. "That's what we need in this world," he said.

11. A NOVICE MUST QUICKLY LEARN ABOUT TROUBLES AND CURSES.

Then Job answered the Lord, and said,

I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.

Job 42:1-7

The friends of Job were novices. They assumed that Job's troubles were from some sins he had committed. A novice has a simplistic understanding of trouble. A novice feels that if a person is having a certain crisis, he must be an evil person. He must have done something wrong to experience all this trouble.

However, as you develop and mature in Christ, you will discover that trouble does not just come because someone has sinned. There are many complex reasons why troubles come.

A novice does not know that trouble comes because of curses. There are curses in the world and these curses are working and being implemented on a daily basis. People end up in great frustration because a curse is at work. A novice does not know that it is only when we are out of this world that there will be no more curse.

> And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:
>
> Revelation 22:3

A novice does not know that sin has become the nature of man. A novice does not know that sin and the effects of sin is something that your ancestors can pass on to you. As the Bible teaches us, sin passed to all men. Sin is something that passes from man to man. You may not have committed a sin but the sin is passed on to you.

> Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.
>
> Exodus 34:7

A novice does not know that God visits the iniquity of people upon their children and upon their children's children, to the third and fourth generation. Many people curse the children of their enemies. You may not have done anything wrong but because you are the child of a bad person, you may experience a curse.

A novice on the other hand does not know about curses. That is why Job's friends judged Job so harshly. They told him, "There must be something you have done wrong." Job's friends told him, "If you had not done something wrong, this kind of calamity would not come upon you." Eventually, Job's wife also joined the bandwagon of those accusing Job but was rebuked quickly.

It is important that you grow up to be not judgmental. Do not condemn. Do not judge. You will find out that there are many other factors that you did not take into consideration. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:" (Luke 6:36-37).

Notice there is a great emphasis in the word of God on being merciful; on not judging and on not condemning people. Every time you make the mistake of judging someone, you move into the mistake of a novice.

Eliphaz the Temanite was a novice. He found out at the end that Job had done nothing wrong. Job was just enduring a test. May you have the wisdom of God! May you not make mistakes! May you be delivered from having to judge or condemn someone! May God give you understanding on what is actually happening! God vindicated Job and showed everyone that He approved of Job.

> **He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days.**

CHAPTER 5

The Immature Thoughts of a Novice

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

1 Corinthians 13:10-11

A novice thinks in a particular way. A mature person thinks in another way. One day my father said to me, "*It's not as it seems*".

Truly I have lived to find out that "*It is not as it seems.*" The minds of novices are filled with idealism. What I think about almost everything is quite different to what I thought when I was younger. My views, my sentiments, my outlook, my opinions and my estimations of things are different. When I was a child, I thought as a child. When I became a man, I began to think as a man. In the same way, when I was a novice I thought as a novice.

Indeed, when you are a novice you think as a novice. When you are no longer a novice you do not think as a novice. In this chapter, I want us to see the immature thoughts of a novice and how it is important to graduate from the way a novice thinks into the way a mature person thinks.

1. A NOVICE EXPECTS A LONG LIFE AHEAD.

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

Genesis 47:9

Jacob was not a novice. He had two descriptions for this life. He described life as having only a few days and also being evil. Life is indeed short! Life is going to be very short. Life is evil! Life is going to be very evil! Men are evil! You will have many evil experiences in this life.

Life is going to be short. Novices do not know this! A novice feels that things are going to go on in the same way forever. Billy Graham said that one of his greatest surprises in this life was the "brevity of life".

A novice must therefore prepare himself for a brief life. When people are invited to serve God, they often think they have a long period of seventy years and beyond ahead of them. "There is more time", they say to themselves. "There is no need to rush. We need to make some money first and become established in the world."

However, when you are not a novice you know that life can be much shorter than you ever dreamed of. One day I was driving to the northern part of Ghana. As I drove, at about 120 kilometres per hour, a motorcycle crossed me suddenly. I braked and we skidded and summersaulted. All of us in the car almost died in that terrible accident. After the accident, my

outlook on life changed. I realised that life was a brief experience. There was no need to plan so extensively as

though I was going to be there for hundreds of years. Death had come knocking on my door! I discovered that life was a brief experience that needed to be handled wisely. Number your days!

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Psalm 90:12

2. A NOVICE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND PROMOTION.

And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day…

And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

Genesis 48:12-15, 20

A novice thinks that he must be promoted because he is older. It is because you are new in the house of the Lord that you think that age makes you more senior to anyone. The kingdom of God is not run by people who are older, per se. "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:28).

God has His reasons for raising one above the other. Joseph himself was thirty years old when he became a prime minister. As a young man, Joseph had ruled over many people who were more experienced and older than he was. Age is not what determines your rank. It is the grace of God and the gift of God that determines who you are in the kingdom.

Jesus was just thirty years old when He became the famed preacher of Galilee, the miracle worker, the healer and the anointed One. You can become great in the kingdom, even though you are a young person. God is ready to use you, no matter your age.

A novice thinks he has to grow older, lose all natural desires and develop grey hair in order to be high-ranking in God's kingdom. You will be anointed with fresh oil as a young person!

3. A NOVICE DOES NOT EXPECT CONFLICTS.

Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah.

And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

AND ABRAHAM GAVE ALL THAT HE HAD UNTO ISAAC. BUT UNTO THE SONS OF THE CONCUBINES, WHICH ABRAHAM HAD, ABRAHAM GAVE GIFTS, AND SENT THEM AWAY FROM ISAAC HIS SON, WHILE HE YET LIVED, eastward, unto the east country.

And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.

Genesis 25:1-7

Abraham was not a novice. He knew that after he was gone, there would be conflicts between the children. Abraham knew that his children would fight with Isaac when he was gone. He decided to prevent the conflict by giving them gifts and sending them away from his son Isaac while he yet lived. Many families cannot imagine that there can be conflict between brothers. Children cannot imagine that terrible conflicts can erupt between siblings. Someone who is not a novice will expect conflicts between children.

Many people would be surprised to see how their children fight and kill each other after their death.

Many pastors act like novices when it comes to the future of their ministries. They assume everything is going to be okay. They assume they will live forever, as though nobody will fight over the church, over the property and over the money.

One day, a healthy and strong pastor died suddenly. No one expected him to die when he did. When he died, many of the people who had been humble servants in the church rose up to fight for control of the church. The pastors were nasty to the founder's wife and the founder's family. They fought over who should be in charge and in the end the person with the loudest voice took control.

Novices do not know that it is possible to be absent from the ministry and present with the Lord in the twinkling of an eye. You must do everything to ensure that after you are gone there will be no fighting or confusion.

Do not be a novice in your thoughts!

4. A NOVICE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF A BLESSING.

And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and HATH TAKEN AWAY THY BLESSING. And he said, is not he rightly named Jacob? For he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, BEHOLD, I HAVE MADE HIM THY Lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

Genesis 27:35-37

Isaac was not a novice. When you are a novice you will think that success in life and ministry is determined by age, by education, by a good background, by money or by wealth. Isaac knew that what really determined the outcomes were the blessings. Even though Esau begged Isaac for a blessing, Isaac knew that Jacob was the one who was going to be great.

It is not by might! It is not by power! It is by the spirit of God. Do not fool yourself! Believe in blessings and believe in curses. Experienced people do not trifle with blessings and curses. I once asked an experienced minister to accompany me to pay a visit to a man of God. This minister refused to come along with me. I asked why. He said that this man of God spoke curses too easily and he was afraid the man might curse him by mistake. The experienced man did not want a curse to fall on him by any chance.

I once asked somebody to curse himself if he was telling a lie. He willingly said, "If I am telling a lie, may I be cursed!" Unfortunately, this young man was still lying through his teeth. I was amazed that this young man was not afraid to curse himself.

A novice thinks that a blessing or a curse is just a nice-sounding poetic statement that is declared by spiritual people. A novice does not realize that destinies are determined and fashioned by the words of a curse or the words of a blessing.

5. A NOVICE TRUSTS IN MEN.

> Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles that he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.
>
> John 2:23-25

A novice trusts in men. Jesus did not entrust Himself to anyone. He knew all men. All men included His disciples. All men included the women. He would not trust even His disciples because He knew what potential a human being had for evil.

What evil can a man do to you? In the book of Timothy, Apostle Paul describes several moral blemishes which will characterize the human race in the last days.

> For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;
>
> 2 Timothy 3:2-4

You will notice from this list that human beings are capable of many evil things, notably, treachery, false accusations, ingratitude and pride. Men love pleasure and men love themselves. Men are so selfish they do not care about others. Jesus did not entrust Himself to this group of selfish, wicked, ungrateful and treacherous people. He did not even trust a woman with His life. He just refused to marry anybody. He knew that no lady would appreciate Him so He did not entrust Himself to anyone. Jesus would not have been able to accomplish His mission if He had trusted in men.

6. A NOVICE EXPECTS ONLY GOOD THINGS .

> Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
>
> For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.
>
> Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.
>
> And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.
>
> I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these

hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Acts 20:28-38

Paul was not a novice. A novice does not know that he will be accused. A novice assumes that people will appreciate all that he has done for them. Paul, on the other hand, expected many of his church members to turn into grievous wolves after his departure. Paul knew ten things that most novices do not know.

1. Paul knew that it was important for you to take care of yourself, even though you are taking care of the flock.

2. Paul knew that some of the members were wolves, even though they appeared as sheep.

3. Paul knew that it was important to warn the people of the evil to come. Without strong warnings, the people would go astray.

4. Paul knew that the word of God was the main thing. Paul knew that the survival of the church depended on how much they stuck to the word of God. Paul did not trust in monuments or buildings that he had put up. He trusted the word of His grace.

5. Paul knew that some of the people who were listening to him would arise and say negative things, hoping to draw people unto themselves.

6. Paul knew the strategy of evil men. Paul knew that some of the congregants were wicked men and that they would try to separate themselves and form their own groups.

7. Apostle Paul knew that there were disloyal, treacherous and deceptive men who were waiting for him to leave.

8. Paul knew that people would accuse him of stealing money so he mentioned specifically that he had not taken or desired anyone's silver or gold. He knew that he had to show to people how he sustained himself because they were full of suspicion.

9. Paul knew that he needed to be practical and work with his own hands if he wanted to be successful in ministry. A novice does not know that he has to work with his own hands.

10. Paul knew that it was more blessed to give than to receive. A novice thinks that it is more blessed to receive than to give.

7. A NOVICE MAY DISHONOUR HIS FATHER .

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.

Genesis 49:1-4

Because Reuben was the first born, he had great hopes that he would inherit his father's wealth. The first-born is supposed to inherit twice as much as everybody else. He is destined to have a double portion of his father's inheritance. However,

Reuben crossed the line when he had an affair with one of his father's wives. This act was too much and it represented the crossing of a boundary of honour. Jacob knew that Reuben would never do well in this life. He declared over him, "You will not excel!"

A novice may be excited and boast that he has slept with somebody's wife. A novice may be excited when he has opportunity to secretly commit adultery. However, an experienced person knows the eventual outcome of these activities will be a curse. You must graduate from being a novice and begin to predict the outcome of people's lives based on eternal laws that never fail. If you live long enough, you will see how curses play out and how people's lives become twisted because of curses they have activated.

Jacob was emphatic, "My first born son will not excel! My first-born son will not do well. My first-born son will not prosper! My first-born son will not be a happy person. He has crossed a line that he should never have crossed." Do not be a novice who thinks that the eternal laws of God's word are to be trifled with. You must fear the laws of God and respect them because they will come to pass.

Leadership and authority do not go to the one who vacillates between opinions. Leadership and authority did not go to Reuben, the first-born, because he was unstable and unreliable. Reuben did not excel and he will not excel! When Reuben had to handle the crisis around the capture of Joseph, he was not bold enough to directly oppose his wicked brothers. He pretended to agree with them and secretly planned to rescue Joseph. This type of leadership is called "Reubenization".

Watch out for people who are not clear on their stance. They seem to support all sides. They try to win everyone's favour, never openly declaring what they believe. Reuben did not openly declare that he was against the capture of Joseph. He never openly opposed his brothers. He never openly identified with Joseph. Reuben never let Joseph know that he sympathised with him. He never took an open stand against injustice and cruelty.

In the end, he was a weak leader who became a liar and a deceiver. He did not excel at all in his leadership role as the first-born. His father knew it. Jacob was not a novice. He knew that Reuben would not excel. I have encountered a number of "Reubens" in my life. None of them has excelled. Never taking a stand genuinely and openly to oppose wrongdoing is "Reubenization".

Such people do not excel in leadership. They do not handle authority well. In the end, confusion grows around everything they do. They seem to be friends of all and are understood by all. But in the end, they will lose their best allies and friends.

8. A NOVICE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND CURSES.

Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations.

O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou

united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Genesis 49:5-7

Jacob knew that Simeon and Levi were wicked and cruel sons. They had murdered an entire family because their sister was raped. A novice will think that justice had been served. But Jacob was not a novice. He knew that bloodshed would have severe consequences. Jacob was not a novice and he declared a mysterious curse on these two sons.

They would be scattered! They would be divided! Their anger would be cursed. These mysterious words would carry down through hundreds of years and mysteriously affect and guide the events of the tribes of Levi and Simeon.

Once again, a novice lightly esteems eternal laws. This time, it was the law concerning the killing of another man. God does not give us the right to shed the blood of an entire community because someone has been raped.

9. A NOVICE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND AUTHORITY.

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Genesis 49:8-10

A novice is someone who does not know that authority is given to someone with love and mercy. Judah is the son of Jacob who suggested that Joseph be sold as a slave to the Egyptians, rather than killing him. Through Judah's intervention Joseph was spared certain death from his wicked brothers. Jacob prophesied that Judah would be the source of leadership. Jacob was not a novice and he saw through Judah's actions and knew that leadership would be given to him.

Leadership and authority go to the one with love and mercy. Only a man of mercy and love must be allowed to be in a powerful position. A wicked person with a lot of power will only turn into a malignant dictator. God will develop love, mercy and understanding in you before He gives you a lot of power and authority.

According to the book of Exodus, "God Himself is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:6-7)."

You will notice that God, who has almighty power, is full of mercy and loving traits. If God were to count iniquities, everyone on earth would be judged and would evaporate within the next ten minutes. There would be nothing left of anyone if judgment was put in the hands of a wicked person.

10. A NOVICE DOES NOT KNOW THE VALUE OF WOUNDS AND SCARS.

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

Genesis 49:22-26

A novice does not know that wounds and scars open the way for you to become a man of authority. What have you survived! What have you been through! Jacob conferred on Joseph the blessing of fruitfulness because he was a survivor. A novice is sad because of his wounds and suffering. A person who is not a novice knows that the wounds, hurts, bad experiences of life are credentials of a true general of the Lord.

Jacob saw that Joseph had survived arrows, spears, swords, hurts and wounds. Many things had been thrown at Joseph. His brothers had been treacherous. His brothers had been liars. His brothers were murderers. His brothers were evildoers. He became the reporter of the sins of his big brothers. Joseph lost all his friends because he was doing the right thing. Joseph was rejected by his brothers! Joseph was hated by his brothers yet he survived!

His father declared that he would be fruitful. His surviving and overcoming wounds of betrayal and rejection made him the best candidate to receive the blessings of the heavens above, the blessings of the deep and the blessings of the womb.

11. A NOVICE CANNOT IDENTIFY DISLOYAL PEOPLE.

That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying,

Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.

FOR I KNOW THY REBELLION, AND THY STIFF NECK: BEHOLD, WHILE I AM YET ALIVE WITH YOU THIS DAY, YE HAVE BEEN REBELLIOUS AGAINST THE LORD; AND HOW MUCH MORE AFTER MY DEATH?

Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them.

For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.

Deuteronomy 31:25-30

A novice cannot identify disloyal people. A novice cannot identify stiff necked and stubborn people. Moses was not a novice. Moses could detect rebellion in the most loyal-sounding group of people. Many people are super pretentious. They sound loyal and faithful. They say all the right

things but their hearts are filled with treachery. They are biding their time and waiting for the right moment to strike.

When you are not a novice you will speak like Moses. You will see through pretence. You will see through statements and declarations of love and loyalty. One day I was at a party and people were giving speeches of appreciation. One of the brothers said that when he came around at first he felt he was not trusted. He explained why he felt he was not trusted. He went on and declared that now he was very happy and fully committed. As soon as he spoke I knew that his days were numbered. Another person stood up and said, "I love Bishop Dag Heward-Mills and I will serve him for the rest of my life." Immediately, I knew this man would also leave the team soon.

How did I know that these two gentlemen would be leaving me soon? When you are a novice you do not know little signs and symptoms of treachery. I noticed immediately and began to plan for the departure of these two gentlemen.

12. A NOVICE DOES NOT KNOW HOW TRUE THE WORDS OF A FATHER ARE.

> Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.
>
> Proverbs 4:1-2

When Solomon grew up, he also grew to respect the words of his father. A novice disregards the words of a father. A novice may think that his father is talking too much. A novice may think that his father is always angry. A novice may think that his father is a grumpy man. A novice may side with his mother against his father, thinking that his father does not love his mother but loves other women. A novice may side with his mother against his father, thinking that his mother is the sweetest soul on earth.

As you grow up your opinion of your father will change. You will realise how wise he is. Your recognition of your father's wisdom is because you are no more a novice.

A novice is someone who does not know the importance of his father's instructions. As you become more experienced, you will find out that your father's words will come to pass.

You will learn to fear the comments and casual statements of fathers. One day my father said to me, "It is not as it seems." I came to respect those words. It truly is not as it seems. Nothing in this world is as it seems to be. You will come to see how real this is and respect your father when you are not a novice.

CHAPTER 6

The Requirements of a Novice

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:6

There are requirements of a novice. These are essential qualities a minister must possess. Every car has essential items that must work in order for the car to be considered roadworthy. A video player is not essential for a car to function properly. An air conditioner is not essential for a car to function properly. However, headlights, windscreen wipers, traffic indicators, brakes and a fuel tank are essential for a car to operate properly.

In this chapter, we are looking at things that God requires of a novice. Things that are essential to God! You may not consider them important but God has declared that they are requirements.

It is time to believe in the requirements that God places before his people. He requires faithfulness, justice, mercy and humility. These do not sound like very powerful things but they are very important to God.

1. GOD REQUIRES FAITHFULNESS FROM A NOVICE.

> Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover IT IS REQUIRED in stewards, that a man be found FAITHFUL.
>
> 1 Corinthians 4:1-2

A novice does not know how important faithfulness, constantness and reliability are. God requires faithfulness from a novice. A novice does not know that faithfulness is important. A novice has all sorts of other qualities on his mind. A novice wants someone who is flashy, smiling, charming, handsome, beautiful and exciting. These are nice and attractive qualities. But what God requires is faithfulness! God requires loyalty. Some people mocked at me when I began to teach about faithfulness and loyalty. Today, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief of the corner.

2. GOD REQUIRES JUSTICE FROM A NOVICE.

> He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and WHAT DOTH THE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO DO JUSTLY, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?
>
> Micah 6:8

A novice does not know how important justice is. A novice does not know that if you sow the seeds of injustice you will reap confusion, turmoil and war.

"He has shown thee what the Lord doth require of thee." God said He has requirements. One of them is that you must be just. Justice has to do with being impartial, being fair, being non-discriminatory, being equal, being unbiased, being reasonable and being even-handed.

The Lord doth require, from a novice, that you do justly. He wants you to be even-handed,

impartial and fair to everyone. One of the reasons why people leave organisations is because they sense a lack of even-handedness and objectivity. When an organisation is based on "whom you know", it means things are not being run fairly. When people in a nation are left to fend for themselves, that nation is not being led by a just leader.

Doing justice is one of the keys to preventing the uprising of rebellious men in the church.

3. GOD REQUIRES MERCY FROM A NOVICE.

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth THE LORD REQUIRE of thee, but to do justly, and TO LOVE MERCY, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Micah 6:8

A novice does not know why God requires mercy. God requires mercy from you because the mercy you show is a revelation of how you see yourself. When you do not know how evil you are, you are filled with cruelty and mercilessness towards those around you. If you have a revelation of your state, you will grow in mercy. A novice can be merciless and unforgiving. A novice is someone who will not accommodate the weaknesses of others.

God requires mercy from a novice.

You need to be merciful as a leader. People who are extremely melancholic cannot accommodate lateness, weaknesses, sin and immorality. A merciful person will be able to accommodate all these people. A novice does not know that the church will have all these kinds of people. The church will always be filled with human weakness, sin, failure and people who let you down.

Many Christians are deceptive and treacherous. Many Christians have dual personalities. A novice needs to learn that ministry raises up both wheat and tares. It is, indeed, a difficult concept to grasp that good and evil will grow together. You must encourage the good to grow even further and you must accept the presence of the evil and hope that it will turn out for good one day.

4. GOD REQUIRES HUMILITY FROM A NOVICE.

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and WHAT DOTH THE LORD REQUIRE of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to WALK HUMBLY with thy God?

Micah 6:8

A novice does not know how important humility is.

One day, I heard an experienced minister make an important statement. He said, "I have sat on committees that assessed pastors who had fallen into sin. In all, I have sat on one thousand, five hundred such cases." He continued, "Every single one of these one thousand five hundred pastors had one thing in common." I was sure that he was going to say that they all had a problem with immorality. But no! He said, "They all had a problem with pride."

Pride was the first sin in the universe.

Lucifer who was surrounded with the glory of God and saw the greatness of God, fell because of his pride.

Pride has claimed the souls of the greatest.

Some years ago, I visited some pastors in their church office. This team of pastors were in charge of a large thriving church. They took me on a tour around their beautiful facility, which I enjoyed very much. When I was leaving they asked me to pray. I prayed for the church and for the pastors. Amongst other things, I asked the Lord to give them the spirit of humility.

When I said "Amen", these pastors immediately jumped on me and asked, "Who do you think you are to pray for humility for us? Do you think we are proud? What do you know about us that you should pray about humility? Is it because we have taken you round our facility, that you are praying for humility for us?" I was taken aback. For the first time in my life, I apologised for praying for humility for someone. I stuttered, "I am so sorry for this prayer." And I left with my tail between my legs.

Within the next five years, these pastors were struck down from their high pedestals. Pride comes before destruction! I had not felt any pride in these pastors when I prayed for humility for them. I prayed for humility for them because I felt it was the greatest blessing in the sight of God. And that was what I desired for them.

I was stunned when one of them ended up in prison and another was sacked from the ministry. When I heard of their plight, I thought to myself, "These pastors should not have been so angry with my prayer for humility." I had been forced to reverse my prayer and apologise for praying for humility. Perhaps if I had not reversed my prayer for humility, God would have granted them humility and that would have saved them from their destruction.

A novice does not know how important humility is.

5. GOD REQUIRES THINGS OF THE PAST FROM A NOVICE.

> I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and GOD REQUIRETH THAT WHICH IS PAST.
>
> Ecclesiastes 3:14-15

A novice does not know how important things of the past are. What has happened in the past often determines what will happen in the future.

God requires a novice to go into the past so that he understands how to live today.

"God requires that which is past" means that God expects a novice to study history so that he can know what to do.

"God requires that which is past" means that God expects you to read biographies and apply them to your life.

"God requires that which is past" means that God expects you to relate with older pastors. If you are following the Holy Spirit, you will find yourself relating to older pastors and not just the young ones.

"God requires that which is past" means that God expects you to use old systems and turn the old values into new values.

"God requires that which is past" means that God expects you to catch the anointing and

wisdom from older pastors who are dead and gone.

"God requires that which is past" means that God expects you to wholeheartedly accept the teachings of the apostles.

God expects you to have friends amongst the seniors.

6. GOD REQUIRES LOVE FROM A NOVICE.

AND NOW, ISRAEL, WHAT DOTH THE LORD THY GOD REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO FEAR THE LORD THY GOD, TO WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS, AND TO LOVE HIM, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

A novice does not know how important it is to walk in love. Love sounds like a weak thing that only mild-mannered non-achievers are interested in. However, Almighty God is love! When you pass from death to life, you love the brethren. (1 John 3:14). After you are born again, you will have love for the brethren.

Love is a sign of maturity. Immature Christians do not have this love.

A novice does not know anything about the love of God. A novice does not know that he will accomplish more for God through love than through the gifts of the Spirit. Think about it! Paul said, "I will show you a more excellent way: the love of God." (1 Corinthians 12:31).

Jesus Christ accomplished more on the cross when He exhibited the love of God. Jesus Christ exhibited the love of God on the cross. On the cross, Jesus forgave sinners! On the cross, He had love!

Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. (1 Cornthians 13:5 NASB). Jesus did not take into account the wrong that He was suffering.

Love bears all things! (1 Corinthians 13:7 NASB). Jesus bore all things that were meted out to Him.

Love endures all things! (1 Corinthians 13:7 NASB). Jesus endured everything on the cross.

Love does not boast! (1 Corinthians 13:4 NIV). Jesus did not boast of who He was when he was on the cross.

He did not boast of the glory He had with the Father.

Love is patient! (1 Corinthians 13:4 NIV). Jesus was patient with His disciples who were yet to understand the reasons for the cross. Through this love, which is patient and kind and gentle, Jesus won our hearts and the hearts of millions of people around the world.

When Jesus manifested the gifts of healing on blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52) and on the two blind men, (Matthew 20:30-34), He did not win the whole world. When Jesus manifested the gift of healing on the ten lepers, only one of them was grateful enough to come and say "Thank you" (Luke 17:12-19). The display of power to heal lepers and blind people did not accomplish as much as one would have thought.

As you can see, Jesus did accomplish more through the love of God than through the gifts of the Spirit. Novices love the gifts and the display of power. When you graduate from being a novice, you will be more attracted to the love of God because it is a more excellent way of achieving many things for God.

7. God requires A NOVICE TO WALK IN HIS WAYS.

> AND NOW, ISRAEL, WHAT DOTH THE LORD THY GOD REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO FEAR THE LORD THY GOD, TO WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?
>
> Deuteronomy 10:12-13

A novice does not know how important it is to walk in the ways of God. You must not walk in the ways of demons or in the ways of the world. The ways of demons are clear. "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:14-15).

Demons lead you to walk in the way of bitterness, envy and strife. Anyone taking decisions based on bitterness, envy and strife is walking in the ways of demons. I remember a lady who was disciplined in full time ministry. She was so angry because she was corrected and appropriately dealt with. She began to walk in bitterness and strife. She joined herself to disloyal elements and spoke treacherously against her spiritual father. She was walking in a dangerous twilight zone. Her husband warned her to desist from her hurt and bitterness. Her husband himself was warned that his wife was walking into great danger. Suddenly, she was destroyed and could recover no more. Dear friend, make sure you are walking in the ways of God.

What are the ways of God? The ways of God are the ways of mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, truth, grace and goodness. The ways of God are the ways of forgiveness and the ways of compassion. It is important to understand the ways and the nature of God. Learn about God! Novices often do not know the God they are serving. Learn about His character and graduate into maturity.

> And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty;* visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*.
>
> Exodus 34:6-7

8. GOD REQUIRES A NOVICE TO FEAR GOD.

> And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?
>
> Deuteronomy 10:12-13

A novice does not know how important it is to fear God. Novices know verses in the Bible but they do not know how real and frightening God is. As such, many novices do not actually fear God.

One day, some young pastors decided to start a church together. As the church grew, the income of the church also grew. There were some arguments about money. As the arguments continued, the young pastors could not contain their disagreements any longer. They argued openly in the church. One day, after the offering, both pastors grabbed the offering basket and fought over it. The offering basket divided into two and the money fell on the floor. The pastors scrambled to get their share of the booty. That was the last day of that church. All the members scattered after the open fight for the offering. These pastors did not fear God nor did they revere the offering that was presented in His house.

It is important to fear God. You may know scriptures about taking offering but you must believe that it is His money, after it has been given. You must revere the silver and the gold that is presented to the Lord. You cannot fight over it and take it away as personal booty.

Eli was an old and experienced father in the ministry. He warned his sons to respect the offerings and to handle the women with care. His sons did not fear God and they did not show the necessary respect for the things of God.

> And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel *to be* my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in *my* habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?
>
> 1 Samuel 2:27-29

9. GOD REQUIRES A NOVICE TO SERVE HIM WITH ALL HIS HEART.

> AND NOW, ISRAEL, WHAT DOTH THE LORD THY GOD REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO FEAR THE LORD THY GOD, TO WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS, AND TO LOVE HIM, AND TO SERVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?
>
> Deuteronomy 10:12-13

A novice does not know how important it is to serve God from the heart. There is a marked difference between those who serve God from their heart and those who serve Him as a job.

A new person may think to himself, "This is something I can do with my head but my heart will be far away." It is impossible to serve God properly, unless you serve Him from your heart. To serve God well, you need to put in everything.

It is sad to see priests and pastors reciting Psalms and reading lifeless sermons to their dwindling congregations. I once visited a church that had one thousand, five hundred seats. There were only six members left in the church. Many of the priests in that country were government employees. They were paid a good salary and kept in the priestly job. After all, priests are always needed for funerals and to pray at certain state occasions.

These six members were also unable to come to church every week. So, they agreed to come to church every two weeks. This huge auditorium was kept empty until these six old ladies appeared on a Sunday. What caused this church to become empty? The letter killeth but the spirit gives life!

When a pastor is just parroting out and reading things that he does not really believe in his heart, the result is death. The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life! (2 Corinthians 3:6)

A novice thinks that he can just read out a book that someone has written and he will have the good results. No way! A novice thinks that he can just listen to a preaching tape and go and repeat it with the same results. Certainly not! The letter kills but the Spirit gives life! It is only when the message goes into your heart that you will minister from your heart with great power and manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

All the issues of life, whether success or failure, come from the heart. Make sure that you are serving God from the heart. There is nothing that you can do in God's kingdom; teaching, preaching, giving offerings, counselling, prayer, fasting, that will benefit you if it is not done from the heart.

10. GOD REQUIRES A NOVICE TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.

> And now, Israel, what doth the Lord THY GOD REQUIRE OF THEE, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?
>
> Deuteronomy 10:12-13

A novice must learn the importance of obeying commandments. Inexperienced people do not know how important it is to obey commandments.

Even in my little organisation, I see the importance of obeying commandments. The difference between successful employees and failing workers is in their ability to ensure that commandments are obeyed.

Everyone who hears a commandment has an invisible and unspoken assessment of the instruction. Is it worth obeying? This is trivial! This is serious! This must be obeyed now! This must be delayed!

Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" Jesus answered clearly and thereby informed the world that there are some commandments which are greater than others (Matthew 22:36-40). Because of this, everyone weighs instructions to see whether they are weighty enough or can be set aside.

Somehow, this process of assessing and weighing instructions is happening all the time. Most of the time, you will make a mistake with your assessment of an instruction. That is why it is important to just obey every single commandment.

A novice will continually make serious mistakes with his assessment of instructions. A person who is more experienced will simply obey in the big things and also obey in the small things.

CHAPTER 7

The "Poikilos" Tests of a Novice

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

James 1:2

Poikilos is a Greek work that means variegated, different, diverse, unfixed, diversify, varied, rainbow, changeable, assorted. A novice can expect to experience various, diverse tests. Expect satan to hit you with an assortment of tests, trials and temptations. A novice must gear himself up for *Poikilos* tests.

In this chapter, I want you to see a wide variation of tests that you can expect as you follow Jesus on the *Via Dolorosa* (The road of suffering and pain). Remember that each test you pass will bring you higher in relation to God. Each test you pass will result in you having a higher rank. Each test you pass will result in you having a higher salary. Each test you pass will result in you being moved to a new category. Many of the things you are experiencing are actually tests. Many of the encounters you have are actually a variation and a sample of *Poikilos* tests.

Get ready for a time of your life as you seek to serve the Lord. There will be tests galore! You will go to a party and you will find yourself in a test. You will meet a man and you will find out that it is a test. You will meet a young lady and you will find out that you are being tested. You will get promoted in church and you will find out that it is a test in humility. Do not be weary of the tests of your life. The more tests you have, the higher your promotion will be!

One day, I was taking an examination and it was very hard. I wondered why these wicked examiners were asking such wicked questions. This oral examination lasted for fifteen minutes. I hardly spoke because I could not answer most of the questions. After the exam, I decided to find out why I had been asked such difficult questions. I found out that I had already gotten high marks and they wanted to give me a distinction, if I could only answer their questions.

My unusually difficult test was simply because the examiners wanted to take me higher and honour me. Perhaps, you are struggling with various experiences that are simply tests in your life. God is seeking to take you higher. He needs to show your exam results to anyone who will challenge your promotion. When the devil comes accusing and saying that you do not belong there, the Lord will show the certificate for all the tests you have gone through and why you qualify to have such a high rank in the kingdom.

When you reject your tests and say to God, "It is too much, I can't take it any more", what you are actually saying is "I can't take any more promotion. I can't take any more honours. Leave me where I am."

Many soldiers are promoted because of what they have been through and what they have survived. Many of them have demonstrated bravery under fire. Are you brave? Are you brave when you are under fire? You will be rewarded and promoted for your bravery.

1. A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE HUMILITY TEST:

All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers. AND THOU SHALT REMEMBER ALL THE WAY WHICH THE LORD THY GOD LED THEE THESE FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, TO HUMBLE THEE, AND TO PROVE THEE, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

Deuteronomy 8:1-3

The humility test happens when you are presented with events, circumstances and happenings that provoke a reaction from you. Your reaction to these circumstances will reveal whether you are a proud person or a humble person. Your reaction to people, situations and incidents will expose your pride or humility. The circumstances and happenings that come together will present you with the opportunity to manifest pride or to manifest humility.

Most of the time, when you are undergoing a test, you do not realise that you are being tested. Many of the circumstances, events and occurrences that happen look like a set of chance events, making it difficult for you to recognize a divine test.

A spiritual person must know that nothing happens by chance. The people you meet, the events that transpired, the circumstances that changed, are all orchestrated divinely. Reading the Bible will help you to see how nothing actually happens by chance.

When you get to heaven, you will find out how much of your life was a test! Looking back, I would perhaps ascribe ninety per cent of all the events in my life as tests of a sort that the Lord orchestrated.

Almighty God was trying to see my response; whether I would pass a test or not. You will only look back with nostalgia at the places you were tested by the Lord.

If you pass your tests, you will be marked as such and promoted to the next test. On this earth, the reward for passing a test is to have another test. You will keep moving from examination to examination and from test to test. Such will be your portion on this *Via Dolorosa.*

When you get to heaven you will be given your marks for the many tests that you passed and for the ones you failed. You will be shocked to find that certain people came into your life only for a “test”. Perhaps you thought they were in your life for some other reason. You will be shocked to discover God’s true reason for allowing you to encounter certain people.

As far as the test of humility is concerned, God is looking for humble responses and humble reactions to the events in your life. When you react with meekness, lowliness and humbleness, you have passed the test of humility. When you react proudly, speaking arrogantly and defiantly, you have failed the test of humility.

A dismissal from the organisation may be a test of your humility. Many people are proud and angry when they are dismissed from an organisation. Some people are humble and apologetic for their mistakes. Two different reactions! Two different responses! A humble response and a defiant, arrogant response! I once dismissed a high-ranking official in the church for not achieving his targets, not working properly and not following instructions. The response of this high-ranking

official was to apologise and humbly accept all the conditions he was given. He passed the test of humility. Shortly after, I felt like re-instating him. And I did!

Around the same time, I dismissed a lower ranking officer. His response was to arrogantly refuse to answer my calls and to hurl insults at me, claiming he had been used as a slave to work in the organisation. He failed the test of humility and was never re-employed. After his arrogant response, there were even more revelations of the bad behaviour of this lower-ranking officer which sealed his fate even further.

Make sure you do not fail the humility test! One day, I entered a crisis season of the ministry. The crisis was such that I needed to react and respond. I kept hearing the Holy Spirit say to me, "Be humble." I knew immediately that the Lord was taking me through a test where my responses would be watched closely. Would I react humbly or would I react with a hypercritical and condemnatory attitude? The Holy Spirit kept warning me about the need to pass the test of humility.

2. ***A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE HARDNESS TEST:*** **this test is to see whether you are hard enough for the ministry.**

He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him.

Psalm 105:17-19

Joseph went through severe tests of hardness. All his imprisonment, slavery, rejection and punishments were to test whether he had the hardness to be in charge of an entire nation.

God desires to use you as a soldier. Dear soldier, you need to endure hardness. Without hardness you cannot do most of the things a soldier has to do. You are graduating from being a soft civilian into being a hard soldier for Christ.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:3

Hardness is required for leadership. Leading human beings requires strength, hardness and confidence. If you pass the test of hardness, you will qualify to be in charge of large numbers of people. Softies cannot control the masses.

The masses always have varied ideas about what should be done. Everybody has two ideas to put on the table. With a hundred people at the meeting, you will have two hundred ideas of what must be done. A strong leader must be able to take hard decisions and implement them, even if they are unpopular. Democracy, by its very nature, makes leaders weak. The fact that the leader has to please different groups weakens him.

I remember a pastor who encountered a crisis in his church. During the crisis, he was challenged by some people about his stance on a teaching that I had taught in his church. Although he believed in the teachings, he told the people who challenged him that he was not sure of my teachings. He gave the impression that he did not really know me that well. Those who criticised him were satisfied that he was not really associated with me. When I heard about it, I was amazed that this brother would dissociate himself from my teaching. Later on, I felt the Holy Spirit telling me that this brother had failed the test of hardness.

3. A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE PATIENCE TEST: **This test is to see whether you are patient enough for the ministry.**

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

James 1:2-4

The test of patience involves bearing provocation, misfortune and pain *without complaining or losing your temper.* The test of patience involves bearing annoyance without irritation or exasperation. The Israelites failed this test over and over again.

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? (Numbers 14:1-3).

Their reaction to provocation, misfortune and pain was simply to complain and murmur. They had no patience for Moses or for God. They provoked God by their lack of patience. They struck at God with their terrible failures of the patience test.

Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and HAVE TEMPTED ME NOW THESE TEN TIMES, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it.

Numbers 14:22-23

Are you failing this test? If you are grumbling, murmuring and complaining about things, you are failing the patience test. When you murmur and speak undertone, you are failing the test of patience. Your irritation may not be apparent to man but it is apparent to God.

When you fail this test, you will be demoted and you will fall back. Many people have fallen back because of their murmuring and complaining. There are people who used to be close to me who have fallen back because they complained, muttered, murmured and grumbled at me behind my back. When I discovered these terrible disloyalties, there was no other way than to allow them to fall back to their true rank. Whenever you fail a main exam you are required to go back and join the class behind you.

When you are undergoing a test, you do not realise that you are being tested. God will allow circumstances, events and occurrences to arise and they will annoy you and provoke you. The tests you experience look like a set of chance events. It is often difficult for you to recognize a divine test.

When you are presented with events, circumstances and happenings that provoke you, your patience will be tested. Your reaction to people, situations and incidents will expose you. If you react without complaining then you have passed the test of patience. To complain is to fail the test of patience!

You will be surprised to find out that certain events happened in your life to see whether you

would complain or not.

God is looking to see whether the new comer will complain about anything. Once you are able to exist without complaining, you have passed the test of patience. In the Bible school, people are sometimes given menial jobs to do as part of their pastoral training. Why is this? It is to test their patience! It is to test their ability to do menial jobs without complaining.

Are you passing your patience tests? Someone who fails the patience tests must not be sent to the mission field. He will complain about everything. He will complain about the people! He will complain about the food. He will complain about the country. He will complain about the poverty. He will complain about the language. He will complain about the girls. He will complain about the smell of the people. He will complain about everything!

Without passing the patience test, you cannot be sent out on a mission.

4. A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE OBEDIENCE TEST:

> And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.
>
> Deuteronomy 8:2

Abraham was tested with the obedience test. There are things that God has asked you to do that have nothing to do with advancing the kingdom of God. God is just interested in finding out if you will obey Him or not.

Imagine that! A whole set of circumstances had been orchestrated by the Lord just to see whether you would be obedient or not. Abraham experienced the test of obedience. He was given an ultimate test of obedience to see whether he would obey the voice of the Lord.

> And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.
>
> Genesis 22:1-2

You must get used to the idea that some of the instructions from the Lord are not given for the reason it seems they are given. Some of the commandments of God are simply tests. If you obey the instruction, you will achieve very little spiritually but you will pass the test of obedience.

Four Examples of Commandments that Were Given to Test Obedience

1. **God commanded Abraham to kill his son Isaac as a test.** God did not actually want Abraham to kill his son. God may ask you to do things that He does not actually want you to do. Instructing Abraham to kill his son Isaac is the best example of this. “And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of … And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Genesis 22:2,12).

2. **God commanded Moses to tell Pharaoh to let His people go free as a test.** However,

God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that Pharaoh would not obey Moses' request. So God did not actually want His people to go till He had performed signs and wonders. "And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them." (Exodus 7:1-5).

3. **Jesus sent the disciples out on a mission as a test.** Jesus knew that they would encounter cities where the people would not receive them. But He still made them go there. Why did He not give the disciples the exact cities to go to, so that they would have a hundred per cent success? Jesus knew very well that some of the cities would absolutely reject the preaching of the apostles. He sent them to places where He knew they would be rejected. "But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city" (Luke 10:10-12).

4. **Jesus told us to go and preach the gospel to all the world as a test.** On the surface, you would think that this instruction to preach is given for the salvation of the world. Then we discover that Jesus was not sending us to preach to all the world to save them but rather as a witness against them for the Day of Judgment. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

Obedience is a very important trait. Novices need to learn that obedience is more important than sacrifice. Learning obedience is a lifelong lesson that must be learnt.

Jesus Christ Himself, had to learn obedience. You must learn obedience too. You will learn obedience by the things you suffer. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;" (Hebrews 5:8).

5. A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE MOTIVES TEST: **This is to test your motive for being in the ministry.**

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and DISCLOSE THE MOTIVES OF MEN'S HEARTS; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

1 Corinthians 4:5

Judgment will be based on what you have done, the hidden things that no one sees and also the motives of your heart. There are many things that are hidden from view. As the years go by, you will find out that many things you thought were good are not good at all. You will find out that evil lurks within the hearts of men, even Christian men. You will also find out that "there is no art to find the mind's construction in the face"[1]. You will find out that many people serve God with the wrong motives.

Motives are things that God looks at.

The reason why a thing is done changes its nature completely. A woman who is being raped by a man will have performed an almost identical act as a woman who is fornicating. However, the reason why the woman who was raped is performing the sexual act is because a gun is pointed at her and she is under the threat of death. On the other hand, the woman who is committing fornication is happily, voluntarily and intentionally engaging in the same act. Few people would condemn the lady who was raped as having sinned. Why not! Her motive for the sexual act was not a motive of love or excitement. Her motive was to prevent herself from getting killed by a crazed man. Your motive changes everything.

[1] *Macbeth by William Shakespeare*

Job enjoyed a great blessing from God. God boasted about Job and said he was a perfect and upright man who hated evil. Satan, on the other hand, questioned the motives of Job. He suggested that Job was serving God because he was protected by God .Would Job still serve God if those benefits were removed?

> And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.
>
> But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.
>
> Job 1:8-11

The test for your motives involves the removal of what you trust in and what you like.

When something you like is removed, we get the chance to see why you are doing what you are doing. For instance, if you have a girlfriend and she is removed from the church, we will see whether you will continue coming to church. When the motive, basis or reason for coming to church is removed and you still come to church, it proves that your motives for serving God are clear.

Most of the time, when you are undergoing a test, you do not realise that you are being tested. Many of the circumstances, events and occurrences that come together look like a set of chance events.

A spiritual person must know that nothing happens by chance. The people you meet, the events that transpire, the circumstances that change, are all divinely orchestrated. Reading the Bible will help you to see how nothing actually happens by chance.

When you get to heaven, you will find out how much of your life was a test.

I realise that the removal of people from my life are tests that the Lord has orchestrated. Almighty God was trying to see my reaction to losses and removals. Am I serving Him because of certain people? Would I serve Him if they were not around? Is it the people I love or is it God I love? God wants to see whether I would pass the test of motives or not.

Over the years, I have suffered the loss of dear people whom I enjoyed working with. Many times, I did not feel like carrying on with the ministry because I loved working with some particular people. The ministry is fun when I am with people I like doing things with. As the losses

mounted, I sensed a test coming on. Was I doing the work of the Lord because I loved working with people or was I doing the work because I loved the Lord Himself? As I became more and more lonely in ministry, I was forced to analyse my motives.

The test of motives will always involve the removal of certain factors to see your real motives. Today, most of the harvest fields of souls are made up of poor people in dangerous countries. There is no financial gain when you go on ministry trips to these countries. Because the financial benefit in ministry has been removed, we see very few pastors travelling to places like Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin and Congo. On the other hand, where the financial benefits exist, we see pastors travelling to America, London and Paris to do the work of ministry.

Young missionaries and apostles should not be promised fancy rewards for going to the mission field. Young missionaries should be promised hardships, difficulty, pain, sorrow and poverty. This prediction of hardship, difficulty, pain, sorrow and poverty is simply a motive test. Most missionaries are happy to go on the mission field and never want to return. But the prediction of these difficulties quickly eliminates those who fail the motives test.

6. A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE OFFICE TEST. **This test is to see if you are really called to a particular office of the five-fold ministry.**

> I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and THOU HAST TRIED THEM WHICH SAY THEY ARE APOSTLES, AND ARE NOT, and hast found them liars:
>
> Revelation 2:2

God was pleased with the Ephesian church because they tested people who claimed to be apostles.

The office you claim to be in the ministry will be challenged. If you claim to be an apostle, you will have to be tested. If you claim to be a pastor you will have to be tested. What are the tests of your office?

The test of the apostle is the test of church planting. The churches planted and the fruits borne by the apostles are the greatest sign that they stand in the office of apostles. A pastor will be able to grow a church but he will not be able to plant other successful churches in other locations.

> Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;
>
> Ephesians 2:19-20

The test of the prophet is the test of his words that do not fall to the ground. Many of the things that the prophet says and declares will happen. He may declare it in the form of a teaching. He may declare it whilst he is preaching. He may declare it casually whilst he is chatting. He may declare it in the form of a whisper. He may declare it in the form of an announcement.

> And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.
>
> 1 Samuel 3:19

The test of a pastor is seen when the flock increases. The growth of your flock reveals you

have passed the test of a pastor. Therefore, the ability to make the flock grow is the greatest proof of your pastoral calling. When a pastor is unable to make his church grow, he has failed the test of a pastor.

The test of the evangelist is the souls that he wins and the miracles that are performed to confirm the message of Jesus Christ. The ability to persuade souls to come to Jesus Christ reveals the presence of an evangelist. A man is proved to be an evangelist by the numerous souls that are harvested into the kingdom of God.

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

Acts 8:5-6

The test of a teacher is in the revelation he brings. The teacher brings revelation of the Word. If a man teaches the word of God without bringing revelation, enlightenment and insight to the people he is not standing in the office of a teacher. The evidence of my teaching ministry is in the revelation of books and teachings that throw some new light on the Scripture.

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

2 Corinthians 12:7

7. A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE HEART TEST. **This test is to see where your heart is.**

But thou, O Lord, knowest me: thou hast seen me, AND TRIED MINE HEART TOWARD THEE: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.

Jeremiah 12:3

In the ministry, your heart is the true source of your ministry. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). The heart is the source of your ministry. Your heart will be tried so that all negative things in there will leave. If your heart is corrupt and deceitful, you will bring forth deception and corruption in ministry. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

In the ministry, it is important that you have a pure heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

In the ministry, the purer your heart is, the more you will see God and the more you will have the anointing. Your level of anointing depends on your heart. The level of power and wisdom you carry depends on the heart you have towards God.

Because your ministry emanates from your heart, it is important that it is tested and tried so that all impurities will be purged from it. "Examine me, O Lord, and try me; Test my mind and my heart" (Psalm 26:2, NASB).

May God purify your heart of negativity and evil thoughts! The test of your heart is found in your speech. What you say reveals what is in your heart.

One day, I had a pastor who had developed a grumpy attitude. I thought he was the quiet type

who was having a bad day. However, I received a report of something he said about me. He said that he felt used. He said that he had slaved in the ministry for years and was being badly treated. When I heard of some of the things he said, I realised that the heart of this brother was very negative towards me.

Your speech, your comments, your statements reveal your heart. "…for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. " (Matthew 12:34)

One day, I heard of a brother making statements about me. This brother had said negative things about me for many years. When I went through the details of what this fellow said, I could only sense hatred. This person was filled with pure dislike and utter resentment. The words of this person revealed ill-will and malicious intent.

Dear friend, your words reveal what is in your heart. It is easy to say the right things when you know everyone is watching. What you say in your unguarded moments, when you think no one will ever hear, is the true test of your heart. Once you utter those negative words, you fail in the test of your heart.

Watch your heart and watch your mouth! Do not destroy yourself with loose speaking filled with negativity, complaints, murmuring, discontentment and accusations. You must pass the test of having a pure heart.

8. A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE LOVE TEST. **The love test is to see whether you have the love of God.**

Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, THE PROOF OF YOUR LOVE, and of our boasting on your behalf.

2 Corinthians 8:24

You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your GOD IS TESTING YOU TO FIND OUT IF YOU LOVE THE LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 13:3 (NASB)

Loving God is the most important thing that you can ever do with your life. Loving God is the great commandment. Jesus confirmed this clearly to us. How do we love God? You can love God by obeying Him. You cannot give God some chocolate to prove to Him that you love Him. His Word is very clear on how we should love Him. If you love God, obey His commandments! "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

If you love God, you must keep His commandments. Every test of love will have something to do with obedience to God.

The test of love happens when you hear a commandment or instruction from God. Often, the mind filters instructions and grades them into four levels: Very important instructions, averagely important instructions, unimportant instructions and frivolous instructions.

Through this categorisation of instructions, many important commands are set aside and deemed to be frivolous. I cannot help remembering the look on people's faces as I have spoken the word of God to them. I can tell that they think that what I am saying is frivolous and

vexatious. I have seen how people have dispensed with my instructions, speaking swelling words against me.

Do not categorise instructions! Do not downgrade the instructions that you receive from your father or pastor. All of them are important. He will tell you when he is making a light-hearted joke. You must take everything seriously.

God will speak to you in one way or another. He will expect you to obey everything He says, whether it makes sense or not.

The test of obedience happens mostly with frivolous sounding instructions. Often, an instruction that will save your life, your marriage, your home, your ministry will be given to you. The instruction will sound so frivolous that you will be tempted to throw it away. The pride of a novice will ridicule the instruction and reduce it to absurdity. Immediately, you fail the love test because you will not obey what the Father is saying.

I learnt something from a statement Derek Prince made. He said, "God told me, 'You will have to obey me in the big things and the little things if you are going to fulfil your ministry.'" The servant who was thrown into outer darkness was the one who said he had only one small talent. (Matthew 23:24-30). Ignoring the little things will only get you deep into trouble. If you love God, you will obey Him! Your love for God will be tested by testing your obedience!

When a novice starts his ministry, he should be careful to obey frivolous-sounding instructions, ridiculous-sounding commandments and words of advice that seem far-fetched. Those far-fetched instructions are your test of obedience and love. When you are able to keep those far-fetched instructions and ridiculous sounding commands, you would have passed the test of obedience.

Abraham tried to sacrifice his son, Isaac. He was obeying what would seem like a mad man's instructions. It almost seemed like Abraham was out of his mind when he tried to obey God's command. His obeying this seemingly absurd instruction was the passing of the test of Abraham's love of God. That is why Abraham is called a friend of God. He was ready to follow absurd, ridiculous instructions once that was what God had told him.

I told a young lady certain things that she should do for her marriage. She despised me and mocked at me in secret. Years later, her marriage was in shambles. I remembered what I had told her and how she had mocked at me with her friends. When you pass the test of love, you are promoted to friendship with God. "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23).

9. A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE BITTER WATERS TEST.

WHEN THEY CAME TO MARAH, THEY COULD NOT DRINK THE WATERS OF MARAH, FOR THEY WERE BITTER; therefore it was named Marah. So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them.

Exodus 15:23-25 (NASB)

The bitter waters test is to see how you handle bitter experiences. Some bitter experiences are tests from God. Why does God allow you to go through the bitterness test? A bitter experience

will provoke a reaction from a novice. A novice has read the book of Psalms and is expecting that goodness and mercy will follow him all the days of his life (Psalm 23:6).

The bitterness test is a set of experiences that are so painful that they provoke a response from you. The whole of heaven stands at attention, waiting to see what your response will be to the bitter waters tests of your life.

The people of God were led by a pillar of fire in the night and a pillar of cloud by day (Exodus 13:21). This pillar led them straight to Marah. God is the one who brought them to the bitter waters.

If you pass the test of the bitter waters, you will come away smiling and thanking God in all things. You will declare that God will take care of you through every day and all of the way.

Be not dismayed, whatever happens; God will take care of you! Beneath the wings of love abide; God will take care of you! Through days of toil when the heart fails, God will take care of you! When fierce dangers attack your path; God will take care of you![2]

God will provide all you need and not deny you anything you ask of him!

No matter the test, lean upon the Lord because He will take care of you! These are the words of someone who has passed the test of bitter waters.

One day I told a novice, "The difference between me and you is pain."

One day I told another novice, "The difference between me and you is a thousand heartbreaks."

Novices have no idea about pain. The truth is, to serve God you must understand pain.

The whole world lies in wickedness, in sorrow, in heartbreaks, in disillusionment and in pain. You cannot minister to this world that is engulfed in pain without understanding pain, sorrow, disillusionment and heartbreak yourself. As you go through your own pain, you can relate to the pain, the emptiness and the hollowness that most of this world feels.

[2]*Song lyrics by Civilla Durfee Martin (1866-1948)*

10. ***A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE PROVISION TEST.*** **This test is to see if you trust God to provide for you.**

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, THAT I MAY TEST THEM, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.

Exodus 16:4 (NASB)

The provision test is a test that God organises to see whether you trust Him to provide for your needs. When Jesus sent out His disciples, He promised them a supernatural provision of all their needs. HE TOLD THEM NOT TO TAKE A PURSE, MONEY OR EVEN A BAG. "And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:" (Mark 6:8).

When they came back he asked them whether they had noticed that He had provided miraculously for all their needs. "And he said unto them, WHEN I SENT YOU WITHOUT

PURSE, AND SCRIP, AND SHOES, LACKED YE ANY THING? And they said, "Nothing"" (Luke 22:35).

The disciples experienced full provision when they passed the provision test.

A novice must realise that following God is also following a great provider. Do you believe in Him as a great provider?

The reason why many people do not come into full time ministry is because they do not see God as a great provider. They failed the provision test before it even started.

Today, people want to see contracts, conditions of employment, dates for promotion, salary adjustment proposals, holiday times, medical provision, provision for travel, per diems for travel, five-star hotels, business class travel, etc., before they agree to be in full time ministry.

When I came into full time ministry, I did not receive a letter of employment with any terms and conditions. I trusted God that He would take care of me and help me survive financially so that I could serve Him properly. I had many ideas of things I could do to make money. Ultimately, I needed to trust God. God provided for me every day, from that day up till today.

I could have rejected the idea of stepping out into the unknown. I could have claimed that there was too much uncertainty and instability in full time ministry. I had no idea what schools my children would attend. God took care of everything. This is the test that most lay people have failed in. They trusted God for salvation but they could not trust Him for provision. God feels rejected and untrusted because we did not trust Him fully to be a provider.

***11. A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE HEARING TEST*. This test is to see your ability to hear from God fearlessly.**

Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but LET NOT GOD SPEAK TO US, or we will die." Moses said to the people, "DO NOT BE AFRAID; FOR GOD HAS COME IN ORDER TO TEST YOU, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin." So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

Exodus 20:19-21 (NASB)

A novice must learn that he needs to hear from God. The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want (Psalm 23:1). You must be transformed into a real sheep that knows his shepherd's voice. Every minister must grow in his ability to hear from God. The children of Israel were brought to Mount Sinai to hear the voice of God for themselves. They did not want to hear the voice of God themselves and they failed the test of hearing God's voice. If you do not hear from God directly you will get disconnected. You may be in a good church with a good pastor who is leading the flock. But you will still need to hear the voice of God for yourself.

Why must you hear from God? Hearing from God directly helps you to know God. The more you hear from God the more you know Him. Remember that people will be rejected by God because Jesus never knew them. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23).

You get to know someone as you talk to him and he talks to you. Hearing from God is

essential. Some people think they can listen to tapes and read out sermons. But you need to know God for yourself and not just through a second person.

This test of hearing is also a test of self-discipline. You will have to build into yourself good habits of regularly going to seek the face of God so that you can hear His voice. As you fail to go away to seek His face, you end up failing the test of hearing from God.

Another way in which you fail this test is when you do not hear God's voice when He speaks to you in another form. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus appeared to his disciples in another form. "After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country" (Mark 16:12).

As you mature in the ministry, Jesus will keep appearing to you in other forms. The pride of a novice blinds you to the other forms in which Jesus appears to you. You can get cut off from the voice of God because of the form of the person He chooses to speak to you. When He appears to you in another form and you are unable to hear Him, you have failed the test of hearing from God.

12. A NOVICE WILL BE TESTED WITH THE FAITHFULNESS TEST.

> Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.
>
> Revelation 2:10 (NASB)

This test is one of the longest you will ever encounter. After you have passed the faithfulness test, you will be qualified for many high positions. A faithful man who can find? (Proverbs 20:6). It is not easy to find faithful people. Faithful people are constant, unwavering and loyal.

It takes years to prove that you are a faithful person. The faithfulness test takes time. Every time you fail the faithfulness test you start from the beginning again. You cannot prove that you are faithful unless a lot of time has elapsed. Faithfulness is not tested over a three-day period. Faithfulness is tested over years.

One day, I sat at breakfast with some pastors. Some of them were older and some were younger. I said to one of the younger pastors, "I would never choose you over this older pastor." The young pastor was surprised because he apparently had more charisma, more gifts and more grace flowing through his life. Why wouldn't I choose him for this high position?

I looked at the older pastor and said, "This person has passed the faithfulness test. He has shown his stability and faithfulness through all the changing scenes of life and ministry. He has shown more than twenty years of faithfulness. Nothing has angered him. He has been transferred several times and still never acted or spoke wrongly. He was given smaller churches to pastor but he never felt he was being demoted or demeaned."

I looked at the younger pastor and said, "I cannot yet say that for you!" True to my word, a few months later, this younger pastor was upset because he was transferred. He resigned suddenly proving that he was not a faithful person.

Perhaps, he was just being taken through the faithfulness test. He had already served for some years. God wanted him to prove himself with twenty years of faithful service but he was unable to achieve the magic number of twenty years. He was bumped off just before he

clocked twenty years of faithfulness.

Today, I have unfaithful people who want me to trust them and love them in a certain way. I would love to trust them and love them in a certain way. But that love and trust is what is given to faithful men.

One unfaithful character even asked me, “Please trust me again! Please love me again! Please forgive me!” I was happy to answer this request. But it must be understood that it takes many years to pass the faithfulness test.

It is like saying, “Please help me to become a medical doctor.” I will be happy to help you with all my heart to become a medical doctor. But it will not take less than six years for you to become a doctor. Even if I want to make you a doctor tomorrow morning, I would be limited by the realities of what it takes to become a doctor. If you asked me, “Please give me a ten-storey building,” I would be happy to give you a ten-storey building. But it will take a lot of time to build you a ten-storey building. I would like to love you and trust you but it will take years for you to pass the faithfulness test where I will be sure that I am loving a human being and not a snake.

Dear friend, the faithfulness test simply takes a lot of time. You cannot be given the faithfulness certificate after being around for just three months. You cannot be given the faithfulness certificate just because you have been consistently making promises over the past six months. No matter who you are, you need many years behind you to show that you have passed the faithfulness test. You need many years behind you before you can be trusted fully.

However, in spite of being around for twenty years, you could still fail the faithfulness test because of your actions over the period.

That is why you must rise up and honour someone who has survived ten years, twenty years, thirty years, forty years and even fifty years of **faithful ministry**.

I pray that you will be a faithful person!

Conclusion

Through the words in this book, it is my prayer that you will move forward in your life and ministry. You cannot be a novice any longer! God has shown you exactly what to do.

To the making of many books there is no end!